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THE

LIFE AND SPEECHES

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN BRIGHT, M. P.

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THE

LIFE AND SPEECHES

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.

BY

GEORGE BARNETT SMITH,

AUTHOR OF THE "LIFE OF THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M. P."

WITH PORTRAITS.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

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PREFACE.

THE publication of this work brings to completion a task which I have long been desirous of accomplishing. That task, although laborious, has been congenial, and I trust that the result of my labour will not go altogether unappreciated by the English-speaking race at home and abroad. My object was to compile full and adequate accounts of the public career and speeches of the greatest Liberal statesman and the greatest Liberal orator of the nineteenth century. Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright stand as public men in a position so exceptional, that no apology is needed for relating the story of their lives while they are still amongst us, especially as I do not of course presume to pass judgment upon their labours and character. Indeed, in this respect I attempt less of formal criticism than may be discovered in the leading reviews and newspapers. It has been rather my desire to collect for the reader accurate and exhaustive materials upon which he may base his own political, personal, and historical estimates.

The great favour with which the public and the press have received the biography of Mr. Gladstone, encouraged me to proceed with the life of Mr. Bright, which may be regarded as a companion work to its predecessor. In the history of Liberalism during our own generation, Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright have been complementary forces. The former has been the great official exponent of Liberal ideas; while Mr. Bright has

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been the great popular leader, first imbuing the multitude with his own principles, and then expounding them to the Legislature, by which body he has seen them eventually adopted and transformed into law. Probably no other English statesman, looking back upon a political career extending over forty years, was ever able to point to so consistent a course as Mr. Bright has led, or to affirm with equal truth that the cardinal principles of his political creed had been successively accepted and adopted by the various Governments of his time. This much even his opponents may—I may even say must—admit.

In some respects, the reader will, perhaps, find the present work more interesting than the one which preceded it. In the first place, I was naturally obliged to devote much space to the ten Budget speeches of Mr. Gladstone; and it is beyond the power of any one to invest these fine displays of oratorial power and financial skill with anything like the charm or the interest which attended their delivery in the House of Commons, by the greatest financier and the greatest statesman and party orator of the age. But in addition to the fact that all Mr. Bright's speeches possess a strong human interest, there is in the present work considerable material that is now published for the first time, and which has a direct personal bearing. Notes of Mr. Bright's earliest oratorical efforts have likewise been recovered, and are now published.

One word as to the speeches. Mr. Thorold Rogers has published three volumes of Mr. Bright's Parliamentary speeches and public addresses, and the selections are very admirable, so far as they go. But there are many important speeches, both in the earlier and later years of Mr. Bright's career, which Mr. Rogers has been compelled to omit; and he has only included one of the right hon. gentleman's speeches delivered in the course of the Free Trade campaign, and that, as it seemed to

me, not the most eloquent or the most vigorous. The reader will find in the ensuing pages a full account of the great movement which developed and demonstrated Mr. Bright's powers, and copious extracts are given from all his remarkable Free Trade speeches. It is true of the greatest speaker that ever lived, that after the lapse of a certain period there must be lengthy passages in his orations which cease to have that special bearing they had upon his age and his contemporaries; and by summarizing these in Mr. Bright's case, I have been enabled to give in full those other passages which must exercise a profound influence upon the minds of men to the latest generations. Then, too, after a time, the general reader requires a connecting narrative of events and debates sufficiently full to enable him to comprehend the various points in the speeches of the orator: this I have endeavoured always to supply in the following work. Besides having dealt with all the speeches in Mr. Thorold Rogers's volumes—giving, I trust, the substance of every argument employed, and publishing *in extenso* the perorations and the most striking passages in all the addresses—the ensuing narrative is brought down to the year 1881. The Parliamentary speeches collected by Mr. Rogers closed with the year 1868; and all the speeches of moment which Mr. Bright has delivered in the House of Commons during the past thirteen years have been added in this work. There are also incorporated the many addresses delivered in the country, including some which Mr. Rogers was unable to embrace in his volume of 'Public Addresses,' and others which have been delivered since his collection was made up. The objects of the two works are thus entirely different. Mr. Rogers, in publishing his volumes, acted in an eclectic spirit, and, as I have said, his collections are excellent, but necessarily only partial; my object has been to furnish a complete survey of Mr. Bright's life, with a full and

comprehensive account of his speeches down to and including the present year. I am able to state further, in conclusion, that an authentic biography of Mr. Bright is now published for the first time.

Apologizing to the reader for troubling him with so long a preface,—which under the circumstances could not well have been avoided,—I now leave the work to his consideration and indulgence.

G. B. S.

London, *Sept.* 24, 1881.

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LIFE

OF

THE RIGHT HON.

JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH, YOUTH, AND EDUCATION.

Introduction.—The Brights a Wiltshire Family.—Migration Northwards.—Mr. Bright's Father.—In Business at Rochdale.—His Family.—Childhood of John Bright.—Early Education.—Favourite Pursuits.—Interest in Political Questions.—His Ancestor, John Gratton.—A Remarkable Character.—Mr. Bright's earliest efforts at Speech-making.—Anecdotes.—The Reform Agitation of 1831–2.

LANCASHIRE enjoys the distinction of having given birth to four of the most eminent English statesmen of the nineteenth century. Early in the year 1788, there was born at Chamber Hall, near Bury, the future repealer of the Corn Laws, and of the disabling statutes against the Roman Catholics, Robert Peel; in 1799, Edward Geoffrey Stanley, afterwards Earl of Derby, first saw the light at Knowsley; ten years later, William Ewart Gladstone was born at Liverpool; and finally, on the 16th of November, 1811, John Bright was born at Greenbank, then near and now within the town of Rochdale. From north to south, and from east to west, the county which claims these distinguished men has long been conspicuous for its political energy and activity. Manchester, Oldham, Bolton, Rochdale, and other towns, have been especially famous for their zeal since the days of the Reform Bill of 1832. Manchester, indeed, has furnished the title for a school of politicians of whom the subject of our biography is the most celebrated living representative. Once member for that city, his relations with it have always been of a cordial and intimate

character. A momentary estrangement, however, led to a severance of his legislative connection with Manchester, and now for almost a quarter of a century Mr. Bright has been member for Birmingham, which, as the capital of the Midlands, has become as great a centre of political influence and enthusiasm as its manufacturing rival in the north.

The Bright family originally came from Wiltshire, where, in the year 1684, we find that they were occupying a farm some two miles from the picturesque village of Lyneham. The original house no longer exists, but it is stated that the farm-house now standing still bears the name of 'Bright's Farm.' Early in the eighteenth century, one Abraham Bright married Martha Jacobs—supposed, from her name, though with no actual proof of the fact, to be a Jewess—and he and his family migrated to Coventry, in Warwickshire. The grandson of Abraham and Martha Bright was a certain Jacob Bright, the grandfather of the statesman. Jacob Bright married Martha Lucas, by whom he had eight children. The youngest of these was named Jacob. He was born at Coventry in the year 1775. All the Brights were members of the Society of Friends, and it may be mentioned as an interesting fact that the registers of the Society were so accurately kept for upwards of two hundred years, that, upon the passing of the existing law affecting registration, these registers were accepted as legal documents, and acted upon.

Mr. Bright's father was educated at Ackworth School, near Pontefract, soon after its establishment; and from school he went to New Mills, in Derbyshire, to serve an apprenticeship with William Holme, who farmed a little land, and had some looms for the manufacture of fustians. In the year 1802, two of his master's sons removed to Rochdale, where they built a cotton mill—then and now called Hanging-road Mill,—Mr. Bright also settling in Rochdale, and being employed in connection with the same mill.

Some time after this, Mr. Bright married one of the daughters of his master, and continued up to the year 1809 engaged in the business of his brothers-in-law. He attended the Manchester market regularly, and his attention to business gained him the good opinion of a firm of agents, who proposed to him to join them in the trade of cotton-spinning, they offering to find the capital, if he would undertake the management of the concern. To this he consented, as there was no certainty that his brothers-in-law and their partners would be willing to accept another partner in their business. He took a lease of a

mill, then standing empty, at the edge of Cronkeyshaw Common, less than a mile from the centre of the town of Rochdale. Here he prospered, and was able in 1816, at the end of seven years, to conduct the business with his own capital; but in consideration of the kindness of the partners who had enabled him to begin business, he consented to prolong the partnership for another term of seven years, at the expiration of which, that is in the year 1823, he took the concern into his own hands. 'From 1809 to 1867,' observed Jacob Bright's son on one occasion, 'is at least fifty-seven years, and I venture to say that with one single exception, and that not of long duration, there has been through that fifty-seven years an uninterrupted harmony and confidence between my family connected with the business and those who have assisted us and been employed in it.' Surely not an empty boast, considering the disturbed periods through which both English labour and capital have passed during that time.

Jacob Bright was thrice married. By his first and third wives he had no issue. His second wife, by whom he had a numerous family, was Miss Martha Wood, daughter of a tradesman of Bolton-le-Moors. They were married on the 21st of July, 1809, and had no fewer than eleven children, seven sons and four daughters. Of these, John Bright was the second, and he was born on the date already mentioned. By the death of the first-born at the age of four years, however, he became the eldest in the family. Mrs. Bright was a woman of remarkable qualities. She, also, had been educated at Ackworth School: she was fond of reading and of poetry, and her mind was singularly clear and logical. Unhappily, she was not long spared to be the helpmeet and companion of her husband, for she died on the 18th of June, 1830, leaving ten children, the eldest of whom was, as we have just stated, the subject of this memoir, he being then only eighteen years of age. Of Jacob Bright's children only five now survive, namely, three sons and two daughters. These are Mr. John Bright, Mr. Thomas Bright, and Mr. Jacob Bright, M.P.; Mrs. Maclaren, wife of Mr. Duncan Maclaren, late M.P. for Edinburgh, and Mrs. Lucas, widow of Mr. S. Lucas. Mrs. Lucas is well known for her earnest efforts in the Temperance cause, and for her support of all movements for the social amelioration of women. Miss Esther Bright, who was married in 1849 to Mr. Vaughan, now one of the magistrates at Bow Street, London, died in 1850; Miss Sophia Bright, who was married to Mr. Thomas Ashworth, died in 1844; Mr. Benjamin Bright died at Graefenberg

in 1845, at the early age of twenty-eight; Mr. Gratton Bright died at Bologna, in 1853, at the age of thirty; and Mr. Samuel Bright died at Geneva in the year 1873. The remains of the last-named were conveyed to England, and they lie buried in the cemetery at Rochdale. Mr. Jacob Bright was liberal and humane towards his workpeople, and bore with all who knew him the character of a strictly just and upright man. After an exemplary life, during which he brought up his large family in habits of virtue and temperance, inculcating also at all times the principles of the Christian religion, Mr. Bright died on the 7th of July, 1851, at the age of seventy-six. He was buried in the Friends' graveyard in Rochdale.

With such parents—watchful guardians exercising constantly over him the most direct influence—it is not surprising that John Bright should early have given evidence of being cast in the same mould. Severely conscientious and just, there was yet in him from the first a vein of tenderness which could melt him to tears at any story of human suffering or wrong. His sympathies have ever been lofty and wide, and in their admiration of the luminous intellect, men have sometimes lost sight of the noble heart which prompted the highest and most eloquent efforts of that intellect. Probably no man of commanding power has yet passed through the world and altogether escaped being the victim of misrepresentation. Mr. Bright has been no exception to the rule; but in public matters the strength of his convictions is more than sufficient to sustain him, while as regards the obloquy which has now and again been cast upon his name by the ignorantly informed, those who best know him best know also its utter groundlessness. We have said thus much upon this point, conscious that as regards some questions of public policy we may feel called upon, with others—but likewise with that deference due to a name so justly esteemed—to dissent from his conclusions.

As a child, Mr. Bright was exceedingly delicate, but with care he was brought through the critical stage of youth, and in time developed into a handsome and intelligent boy. Though apparently robust, however, he was never so strong as he appeared. Quite early he was sent as a day scholar to the boarding-school of Mr. William Littlewood, of Townhead, Rochdale. His abilities were far above the average, but we do not hear much of precocity—a thing by no means to be regarded as unpromising, seeing that many precocious youths have entirely failed in after-life, while some who as children were regarded as their intellectual inferiors have attained

world-wide distinction. Mr. Bright's devotion to the piscatorial art is matter of universal knowledge; and it would surely have delighted the heart of old Izaac Walton, could he have revisited the earth, to find so ardent a follower of the 'gentle craft' as John Bright was before he attained the age of twelve. It is pleasant, notwithstanding, to find that study was not neglected. Mr. Littlewood was satisfied with the progress of his pupil, and that pupil has on more than one occasion since spoken of his first master with great respect and affection. In the year 1822 Mr. Bright was sent to the Friends' School at Ackworth, near Pontefract, where he remained for a year. The next two years were spent in a school at York, conducted by Mr. William Simpson. The site of this school is the first house out of Walmgate Bar, on the left. The air of York not being favourable to his health, he was removed to a school at Newton, six miles from Clitheroe, where he passed a year and a half very pleasantly. The studies here were neither difficult nor protracted, and there was much opportunity for healthy amusement. Mr. Bright, who was especially fond of outdoor pursuits and pleasures, was greatly pleased with the beautiful scenery which abounds in the neighbourhood of Clitheroe. The river Hodder, a tributary of the Ribble, afforded excellent fishing, with bathing and swimming in the summer; while the young student was not long in discovering every point and nook of interest in the surrounding hills and woods. Long walks, broken by birds'-nesting, were matters of frequent occurrence; and he found in the whole of this lovely district a perennial spring of amusement and enjoyment.

On the 16th of February, 1827,—that is, when Mr. Bright was but three months over fifteen years of age,—he left school for good, to engage now in the serious occupations of life. He came home, and at once began to attend to business, helping in the warehouse, walking through the mill, and making himself acquainted with the machinery and the different processes carried on at the works. Mr. Jacob Bright took a practical view of things, and did not regard as essential a classical training for his sons. Had such a training been given to Mr. Bright, he would undoubtedly have gained in some respects, but the world might have lost that wonderful freshness which distinguishes all his orations. As may be gathered from the character of his speeches, however, Mr. Bright was at a very early period a student of the best English poets—in whom he is well grounded—and of the course of British history. He also took a keen interest in the various public questions of the time.

But although he had previously been stirred by such subjects as Catholic Emancipation, it was really in the year 1830 that his strongest concern in practical politics began. In that year a very exciting election occurred at Preston. The late Lord Derby, then Mr. Stanley, was opposed by Henry Hunt, or 'Radical Hunt,' or 'Orator Hunt,' as he was variously styled. It appears that in Messrs. Bright's warehouse there was one Nicholas Nuttall, a very intelligent man; and Nicholas, as he was always called, evinced the utmost enthusiasm in the Preston contest, which, as the manner of elections then was, lasted many days. There were no railways and no telegraphs, but each morning the state of the poll at Preston was made known in Rochdale. Nicholas discussed the progress of the election from day to day, and when the contest ended in favour of the popular candidate, Mr. Hunt, his delight was unbounded.

Much of this enthusiasm was of course imparted to Mr. Bright, and politics now became in some degree a study with him. Mr. Bright is a Liberal both of necessity and from reason. His father was Liberal, and the religious Society in which he was brought up was composed of Liberals. He had heard and read much of the history of the Friends, and of the persecutions they had endured, and also of their principles of equality and justice. He knew that he came of the stock of the martyrs—that one of his ancestors, John Gratton, of Monyash, in Derbyshire, had been in prison for several years because he preferred to worship in the humble meeting-house of his own sect, rather than in the church of the law-favoured portion of the community, by whom the Friends were barbarously persecuted. This John Gratton, whose granddaughter was Mr. Jacob Bright's grandmother, was a remarkable man. He was a Quaker preacher of great power and indomitable energy, who travelled through many of the English counties, his religious fervour and eloquence exercising especially an extraordinary influence for good in Cheshire and Derbyshire. He also visited Scotland and Ireland. Arrested several times, and subjected to the statutory fine of £20, he never abated his zeal. In his own journal he says: 'I was a prisoner for the Gospel's sake above five years and a half, before I was set at liberty by King James the Second. As also many hundreds more were, I was discharged in open court, the 23rd of the first month, 1686.' John Gratton died in the month of September, 1711; and in the biographical literature of the Society of which he was a most conspicuous member will be found the record of his life.

In the county in which he lived he was a person of much influence, and in a Parliamentary return which Mr. Bright moved for many years ago, it is recorded that when Nonconformist places of worship were legalized by the Toleration Act, all the meeting-houses of Friends in Derbyshire were registered by, and in the name of, John Gratton.

Something of this man's spirit was communicated to his descendants, and in the inflexible and upright character of John Bright we perceive a by no means faint reminiscence of John Gratton. Much of the same character, indeed, runs through all his family; and there is scarcely one of his brothers and sisters who has not either devoted himself or herself to the elevation of the people, either within the quiet sphere of personal influence or upon the platform.

Interest naturally attaches to Mr. Bright's earliest efforts at public speaking; and his first speech of note of which any record exists, was one made in connection with a series of lectures delivered by Mr. J. Silk Buckingham at Rochdale, on Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and India. Mr. Buckingham, who will doubtless be widely remembered as the founder of the *Athenæum*, was a highly cultured man, and an admirable and effective lecturer. Mr. Bright, from his remarks made at the close of the series of addresses, seems to have been much impressed by the vivid pictures drawn by Mr. Buckingham. He rose to propose a vote of thanks to the lecturer, and we are fortunately able to give the brief speech he delivered on this occasion. After an introductory sentence, he said: 'Under the able guidance of an experienced traveller we have visited the classical land of Egypt; the wonders of her splendid cities have been described, the tombs of her Pharaohs and of their subjects have been explored. We have even ascended the giant pyramid, and from its summit have surveyed in imagination the splendid prospect so beautifully, so poetically described to us—the glorious sun rising in the east proclaiming the approach of day, the silvery moon sinking in the pathless waste of sand, and as if unable or unwilling to compare with his superior brilliancy. We have traversed the barren sands of Arabia, and have, as it were, feasted our eyes upon the beauties of the oases of the desert;—we have admired the nobleness of soul which so eminently characterizes the wandering tribes, and have paid our tribute of respect to that spirit of independence whose fire burns as brightly in their breasts now as in ages long gone by;—we have heard with feelings of solemnity and of unspeakable interest the animated description of the

present condition of Palestine;—we have viewed with astonishement the lofty cedar of Lebanon—the witness of a thousand years, and the unvarying fertility of Mount Hermon;—we have trod the calm and peaceful retreats of the Mount of Olives, and have perambulated the streets of Jerusalem, the most renowned city on the face of the earth; and as we gazed on Calvary, the recollection of the momentous transactions with which it will ever be associated awakened in us feelings which it would be vain for me to attempt to describe. From the summit of a neighbouring hill we have beheld Damascus in all its beauty, its fertile plain, its lucid streams, its glittering minarets, its lofty domes—almost realising to the fancy the existence of a Paradise upon earth. Again, we have wandered at leisure along the banks of those majestic, those magnificent rivers the Tigris and the Euphrates, and have felt sad at beholding the complete desolation of Nineveh and Babylon. We have journeyed on to Bagdad, a city whose very name is synonymous with splendour; we have admired the vastness and simplicity of its mosques, the beauty of its caravanserais, the grandeur of its baths, the extent of its bazaars—and I doubt not we have received impressions in some degree favourable with regard to the manners and customs of Eastern life. This evening we have penetrated into that grand country situate between the Indus and the Ganges, that land which our imagination has pictured as ever teeming with wealth—

> "Where from fountains ever flowing
> Indian realms their treasures pour."

We have seen how that wealth may be rendered available to England, and how the blessings of civilization and Christianity may be spread abroad in that vast empire. We have also had a clear view of that which to this country is of great importance,—viz., the immense field which there exists for the extension of British commerce, and for the consumption of British manufactures.'

In response to the call of Mr. Bright, Mr. Buckingham was warmly thanked for his instructive lectures—lectures, perhaps, the more generally appreciated, because at that time the means for obtaining information on such subjects, within the reach of the working classes, were very limited. It is interesting to note that the above early and hitherto unpublished observations by Mr. Bright show that even soon after he had passed his twenty-first year his attention was drawn to the great commercial value of India.

The sympathies of Mr. Bright were in his youth enlisted in the cause of temperance, and his first appearance in public in connection with the movement, which was then creating considerable interest in Lancashire and Yorkshire, was at a temperance meeting held in the schoolroom at Catley Lane Head, near Rochdale. Amongst his other early addresses, was one delivered at a meeting of the Bible Society, held in the Friends' Meeting-house at Rochdale. The Rev. John Aldis, a Baptist minister of eminence—whose sons have of recent years won distinguished and unparalleled honours at Cambridge—has described his meeting with Mr. Bright on this occasion. In 1832, Mr. Aldis was stationed at Manchester, but he attended the Rochdale meeting above mentioned, and subsequently gave the following interesting reminiscence of Mr. Bright's appearance. Mr. Aldis was at a friend's house when John Bright arrived to accompany him to the meeting: 'Soon a slender, modest young gentleman came, who surprised me by his intelligence and thoughtfulness. I took his arm on the way to the meeting, and I thought he seemed nervous. I think it was his first public speech, at all events in such connection. It was very eloquent and powerful, and carried away the meeting, but it was elaborate and *memoriter*. On our way back, as I congratulated him, he said that such efforts cost him too dear, and asked me how I spoke so easily. I then took the full advantage of my seniority to set forth my notions, which I need not repeat here, except this—that in his case, as in most, I thought it would be best not to burden the memory too much; but having carefully prepared and committed any portions when special effect was desired, merely to put down other things in the desired order, leaving the wording of them to the moment. Years rolled away. I had entirely forgotten the name of the young Friend, when the Free Trade Bazaar was held in London. One of those engaged for it—Mr. Baker, of Stockport—calling on me, asked if I had called on Mr. Bright. I said I had not been able to attend the meetings, and did not personally know him at all. He replied, "You must, for I heard him say that you gave him his first lesson in public speaking." I went to a subsequent meeting, and recognized the young Friend of 1832.' While Mr. Bright was energetic at this time as regards a variety of objects, he did not forget that healthful recreation which does so much for the life of the body. In addition to other pursuits, he was an active member of the Rochdale Cricket Club, until the year 1833, playing in its various matches, and playing well. In the record of total

individual scores for the year 1833, his name appears fourth on the list.

The Reform agitation was at its height in the year 1831. The town of Rochdale had not been included in the original schedule of the Reform Bill amongst the towns which it was proposed to enfranchise, and this fact caused great disappointment in the town and district. Vigorous steps were at once taken, and meetings held upon the question. Mr. Bright was present as a listener at one of these meetings. Ultimately the movement was successful, and the name of the town of Rochdale was inserted in the favoured list. The debates in Parliament during the ensuing session created the most profound feeling throughout the whole of Lancashire. When the bill passed, reformers hailed with delight the greatly enlarged constituency.

Towards the close of this memorable year in the history of the Reform question, Mr. Bright attained his majority. As yet he was engaged in expanding his mind by reading and observation, and in garnering the rich fruits of experience. Though unconsciously laying the groundwork of future distinction, he had not hitherto given striking evidence of the possession of those powers which were destined to place him in the very first rank of British orators.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY SPEECHES, ADDRESSES, ETC.

Mr. Bright first visits the Continent.—The Rochdale Literary and Philosophical Society.—Mr. Bright on Capital Punishment.—On various questions of interest.—Tour in the East.—Address on Church Establishments.—Education.—Mr. Bright's first meeting with Cobden.—Factory Labour.—The Corn Laws.—Address to the Reformers of Rochdale.—Church Rates.—An exciting Contest.—Animated Speech by Mr. Bright.—His efforts as a Writer.—First Marriage.

In the year 1833 Mr. Bright went abroad for the first time. His delight in foreign travel was very great, although he has not, as he himself has said, done what he could have wished in this direction, in consequence of the pressure of business and public engagements. His first continental experiences were brief. From London he passed over to Ostend, visiting Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, Cologne, Frankfort, and Mayence. He voyaged down the Rhine to Rotterdam, but finding the cholera severely prevalent in that city, returned to England. On arriving at Rochdale, he occupied himself as usual with business, attending the Manchester market with the utmost regularity, and earning considerable reputation for his business habits.

Mr. Bright took a prominent part this year in the formation of a society called the Rochdale Literary and Philosophical Society. Politics and religion were excluded from its discussions, but in other respects the society—as such societies will—boxed the entire compass of social, philosophical, and practical questions. There is one subject on which Mr. Bright has always felt strongly, and upon which he has recently spoken with much force, viz., the abolition of capital punishment. It will therefore not be without interest that we shall give some unreported notes of a speech he made in his twenty-second year upon this question, and in connection with the above-named society.

He began by observing that he was not disposed to argue the question as to the propriety of the punishment of death on religious grounds, nor did he intend to quote largely from Scripture in support of his views. They should study this

question with a just estimate of its importance, and unbiassed by the prejudices which formed an almost passless barrier. It was urged that there was a declaration in the Bible to the effect that 'whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed,' yet David committed a premeditated murder, and he was not destroyed. 'Here then it is proved that death need not of necessity follow the commission of murder, and there are probably other modes of punishment which are of equal or greater efficacy. As regarded the New Testament, there was amply sufficient in that to convince the real inquirer after truth, that any extreme of cruelty in punishment beyond what could be proved to be really necessary and indispensable, was contrary to the spirit of Christianity. The question then resolved itself into one of utility, and if it could be shown that the punishment of death was useless and unnecessary, humanity would have gained a triumph. Mr. Bright then went on to maintain that the end of all punishment should be the correction of the criminal with a view to reclaim him, and the holding out of an example which might serve to deter others from the like evil actions. Now correction with a view to amendment was certainly unattainable by death, and thus one-half of the end to be gained by punishment was entirely defeated. The intention of example, too, was no better answered, when we found that year after year desperate robberies and murders were committed as frequently as ever, and that criminals treated the idea of death with levity and scorn. Every possible expedient should be had recourse to before taking human life. With regard to the argument that the 'death' punishment placed it out of the power of the individual to commit murder again, he pointed out that upon the same reasoning every insane person might be put to death, because the public were never entirely secure from the consequences of insanity. If we could avoid the mad actions of these men, could we not as easily place the criminal in such circumstances that he should never more have power to inflict injury? But there was another very strong argument against the punishment of death, viz., that if the sufferer were guiltless the injury was irremediable, the wrong irreparable. Many cases had occurred where innocent men had been executed. What reparation could be made here? The consequences were fearful if the sufferer were innocent. Such a punishment could not be in accordance with the spirit of our nature, or with the principles of the Christian religion. It was abhorrent alike to sound policy, religion, and humanity. As a proof that the punishment was repug-

nant to us, he cited the estimation in which the character of a public executioner was held. Why should we place him almost without the pale of civilized life, while 'the warrior is dressed in a manner calculated to charm the unthinking? his proud and haughty bearing imposes upon the ignorant, his glittering steel and trappings strike the fancy, the stirring strains of martial music divert the thought from his real occupation, and we look with complacency—nay, with approbation—upon a profession, if not instituted for, yet generally employed for, the sole purpose of ravaging the earth, murdering mankind, of aggrandising the few at the expense of the many, and of destroying the roots of the blessed tree of liberty wherever they may have a tendency to flourish.'

This passage foreshadows a little Mr. Bright's declamation in later years. The speaker proceeded to remark that custom was no proof that a thing was right. But if we abolished capital punishments, what was proposed as a substitute? The ferocious robber and the murderer must not again be let loose upon society. There was a punishment that would answer both the ends of correction and reclamation, viz., solitary confinement, with or without labour as circumstances might require. It was generally acknowledged that crime is prevented more by the certainty than the severity of punishment, and here the punishment would be rendered perfectly certain, and regulated by degree. In reply to the objection that solitary confinement is not punishment enough for the crime of murder, Mr. Bright asked, 'Does any one know what solitary confinement is? When the guilty mind is left without anything to distract attention from itself, it cannot remain inactive, it must think, and the remorse which accompanies its misdeeds will prey upon it with tenfold fury; conscience, perhaps long dormant, will reassert its sway, and the pangs of self-condemnation will be immeasurably increased; nay, if all the wretchedness of a few years of solitary confinement could be concentrated into a few moments, would it not surpass all the pain which can possibly be felt from dissolution? Upon the horrors of solitude when the guilty soul can prey upon nothing but itself, I can adduce the testimony of one who, I doubt not, at times felt deep remorse for his misdeeds. I allude to Lord Byron, who says —

> "There is no power in holy men,
> Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form
> Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,
> Nor agony, nor greater than all these,
> The innate tortures of that deep despair

Which is remorse without the fear of hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself
To make a hell of Heav'n—can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit, the quick sense
Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge
Upon itself: there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd,
He deals on his own soul."

Men who had committed terrible crimes had delivered themselves up to justice because they could bear no longer their load of misery. They preferred the momentary horrors of a public execution rather than be doomed to drag out a wretched existence. He firmly believed that the punishment he had alluded to would, in many cases, be much more dreaded than death itself, and that incarceration would have a far more powerful and enduring effect upon the public, than any which could be produced by the frequency of public executions. 'When we consider,' urged Mr. Bright, in conclusion, 'that the effect of public executions is to deaden the feelings of kindness and mercy implanted by nature in the breast, to blunt all the finer sensibilities of the heart, and substitute barbarism and vindictiveness in the place of civilization and Christian forbearance—when we consider the awful consequences to the wicked, degraded, and miserable sufferer, allowed no time for repentance, distracted by the thoughts of his approaching fate, hurried from time into eternity by the hand of a being owing his existence to the same Creator as himself—shall we not conclude that man, a being weak in purpose and feeble in action, whose limited comprehension and contracted views are daily evident to our senses, by taking away the life of man employs a power which has not been delegated to him, and usurps an authority which belongs only to our Sovereign Judge? I appeal to you as to men whose minds are unfettered by the trammels of prejudice, and as being disposed to have other and better motives for your actions than the mere sanction of custom, I appeal to you on behalf of humanity and religion, and feel confident that the justice of the cause will ensure your zealous support.'

Such was Mr. Bright's first utterance upon the question of capital punishment. Other interesting topics were discussed by the Rochdale Literary and Philosophical Society. For example, on one occasion Mr. Bright raised the question, 'From our study of history, ancient and modern, what form of government appears the best suited to promote the happiness of mankind?' Ultimately, the mover submitted a resolution, 'That a

limited monarchy is best suited for this country at the present time;' and this motion was carried by eighteen votes to four. At another meeting, Mr. Bright discussed the point whether Alfred or Alexander was more justly entitled to the epithet of 'the Great.' He summed up strongly in favour of the English monarch, and the meeting unanimously endorsed his views. On the question whether defensive war was justifiable on scriptural grounds, Mr. Bright moved an amendment to the effect that it was not justifiable; and this was carried by a majority of six, thus showing that the Society had a considerable number of peaceably disposed citizens in its midst. Mr. Bright supported a motion declaring that in the opinion of the meeting the universal education of the people was necessary, which also was unanimously agreed to. Another motion was passed on the initiative of Mr. Bright to the effect 'That the moral tendency of public amusements, such as the theatre, circus, etc., is injurious.' The society was rather puzzled by the 'science' of phrenology,' which was just then beginning to attract great attention, and exactly even numbers were recorded for and against it. During the session of 1836 Mr. Bright gave a lecture upon the decline and fall of nations, concluding with a motion, 'That there are causes to which the decline of nations may be attributed without having recourse to the argument that "nations are subject to the same laws as individuals," etc.' This rather vaguely-expressed resolution secured general opinion in its favour. A member having brought forward for discussion the question, 'Was Mary, Queen of Scots, accessory to the death of her husband, Lord Darnley?' a long and warm debate ensued. Mr. Bright, whose historical studies were amongst his most favoured intellectual pursuits, gave evidence of a close acquaintance with the subject, and expressed his fear that Mary was not entirely blameless in the matter. But that unfortunate and misguided Queen was saved from utter condemnation at the hands of the Rochdale debaters by the passing of a resolution to the effect that the contradictory nature of the evidence adduced by historians of the sixteenth century made it impossible to convict or acquit Mary of being accessory to the murder. In June, 1838, Mr. Bright read an essay on the 'Success of Steam Navigation between this Country and America, and the spread of Civilization and Knowledge consequent thereon.' Later in the same year he headed a committee formed for the purpose of making a collection for an exhibition, when a number of very entertaining and valuable objects appear to have been secured. Mr. Bright was

really one of the chief moving spirits of this society, which, in the general literary ability of its members, and its lists of eminent men as lecturers, etc., ranked above the average of such debating institutions.

In the summer of 1836 Mr. Bright again went abroad, his journeyings on this occasion being more extensive and protracted. He sailed in the Crescent steamer from Liverpool, bound for Smyrna and Constantinople, visiting Lisbon, Gibraltar, Malta, Syra, the Piræus, Athens, and Marathon. A fortnight which he spent in Smyrna with an English merchant, Mr. H. R. Barker, was a time of great enjoyment. On arriving at Constantinople, he found the plague present in that city, and was not admitted into the houses of the Europeans. Mr. Bright subsequently visited Beyrout, Jaffa, Jerusalem (with the adjacent points of world-wide interest), and Alexandria. He was struck by the wretchedness of the people at the last-named place. From Egypt he again went to Athens, where he remained for six weeks, being unable to get away, as there were no vessels for Malta. While at Athens, Mr. Bright was attacked by a severe intermittent fever. Upon his recovery he left the Piræus on Christmas Eve for Malta in a Greek brig. The passage occupied eleven days. There was very little wind, and two days were lost owing to the captain's taking a mistaken course.

On arriving at Malta, the vessel was put in quarantine for fourteen days. Subsequently Mr. Bright went by sailing-boat to Catania, thence to Messina, Palermo, Naples, and Rome. He also visited Florence, Leghorn, and Genoa, and returned to England by way of Marseilles and Paris. Altogether, he was away from England for a period of eight months, of which more than a month was spent in quarantine. This spell of travel was not only of immense interest to Mr. Bright, but he always regarded it as of great physical and intellectual benefit to him. His journey raised only one feeling of regret, viz., that owing to uncontrollable causes it could not be repeated. Upon his return in 1837, the enthusiastic traveller delivered a lecture in his native town on the countries he had visited, interspersing his descriptions with extracts from Lord Byron, a poet whom he at that time greatly affected. Perhaps the most effective passage in this lecture was Mr. Bright's description of Jerusalem, a city which had long exercised a strange fascination over him, as it does upon the minds of all Christians. He was greatly moved by its fallen grandeur, and the literal fulfilment of the old prophecies of which it furnished so striking an example.

A speech delivered by Mr. Bright about this time at a great meeting at Rochdale, but of which no report was published, enables us to get at the right hon. gentleman's early views upon the question of Church establishments. Being called upon to second a resolution that all civil establishments of religion are directly opposed to the spirit of Christianity, Mr. Bright observed that the creed and form of worship did not constitute the Establishment, but the preference and union of the civil power. They wished to wage no war with religious opinions; their object was to show the mischievous tendency of any alliance between Church and State. A principal argument for the continuance of an establishment was that it provided for the religious instruction of the whole population. But establishments could not compel people to become religious, or to believe in any particular tenets. They could compel and did compel, payment for benefits which they pretended to dispense, but which were not received. But they could only offer religious instruction, and did not Dissenters do the same? He trusted that the time had gone by when Christianity should be thought to stand in need of such assistance.

Referring to the argument that the downfall of the Establishment would be attended with the downfall of Christianity, which he described as monstrous, Mr. Bright thus raised by anticipation the Irish Church question: 'This assertion carries with it its own refutation; but if arguments are wanted, if instances and examples are requisite, look for a moment upon America and upon Ireland. In the former country there is no civil establishment; all are alike equal in the eye of the Government; all work smoothly together, and without those never-ending heart-burnings and jealousies which exist in this country, and particularly in Ireland. Will any one venture to say that the United States of America are less religious than Ireland—that crime is more common and immorality more prevalent? And yet there religion receives no support from, nor is it in any manner connected with, the State; whilst in unfortunate Ireland there is a Church established by law, countenanced by the Government, and supported by an army of some twenty-five thousand men, wringing its maintenance from an almost starving population, seven-eighths of whom entirely disagree with it in principles and in doctrine. When he heard of the acts of persecution which took place in Ireland, he could almost blush that he was of a nation whose Government and whose Church, established by law, sanctioned such unholy deeds. But it was in the very nature of all monopolists

to persecute those who were unwilling to submit to their dictation. Basil Hall, when speaking of America, and of monopolies in religion, observed that America was more religious than England, and England was more religious than Italy—the closer the monopoly, the less abundant the supply. The corruption which was so evident in the Church established by law arose mainly, if not solely, from its alliance with the State. To ally a Church with the State was the best and speediest method of impairing its efficiency and destroying its purity. When the Church was dependent upon the State, it naturally supported that system of government which was willing to continue its monopoly. At one time it was *conceded* to the English clergy by the State to preach against the horrors of war if they were not chaplains to regiments or in the navy. The ministry, therefore, by being dependent upon the State, became degraded and corrupt, and more desirous of retaining their incomes than of propagating the truths of religion. A remarkable instance of this was upon record. Out of 9,400 beneficed clergymen who acknowledged the Pope as head of the Church, only 177 preferred to resign their livings rather than own the supremacy of Queen Elizabeth. This reminded him of the Vicar of Bray, whose religious convictions were dependent upon the Sovereign for the time being. When reproached for his inconsistency, he answered that he considered himself a very model of consistency, for he had long been determined to live and to die the Vicar of Bray.

Mr. Bright went on to remark that the Establishment was papal, though its present religion was not. The eyes of the people were at length being opened to the crying abuses of the system, and to see that a civil establishment of religion was incompatible with religious liberty—contrary to that freedom of conscience which was the inalienable right of every human being. Toleration was not liberty and they refused to have only by permission that which belonged to them as a right. History proved that all religions which had been exalted above others, and patronised by the civil power, had shown themselves intolerant in spirit, and persecutors of those who differed from them. The priesthood in all ages had been persecutors—whether Jews, Pagans, Catholics, or Protestants. Seeing, then, these things, and that within the last two hundred years there were no less than five thousand of the members of his own society, as well as great numbers of Baptists, in prison for conscience' sake, did it not seem inevitable that a predominant sect should imbibe an intolerant and a persecuting spirit?

'The declaration of the laity of the Church as by law established says, I believe that the Establishment has been the means of increasing individual piety and national prosperity; but I would ask, How comes it that England is now, as regards a vast proportion of her population, ignorant and irreligious—how is it that whilst the Church has had the king for its head and governor, the two Houses of Parliament to support it, and the whole influence of the aristocracy and landed gentry of the country to boot (with the advantage of being educated at Oxford and Cambridge, from which Dissenters have been shut out)—that whilst the Church has had millions upon millions to work upon, drawn not only from their own party, but from the property of Dissenters—I ask how comes it that England is neither a sober nor a moral country, and that vice in every shape rears its horrid front? Does it not prove that there is a radical error in the system? By the union of the people of England advantages of no trifling amount have lately been gained: the barrier of the Test Acts has been broken down; the system of Parliamentary corruption has been stormed with success; and I trust the time is not far distant when the consciences of men will be no longer shackled by the restrictions of the civil power, when religious liberty will take the place of toleration, and when men will wonder that a monopoly ever existed which ordained State priests "sole vendors of the lore that works salvation."'

This is, perhaps, the freshest and most forcible of those early addresses by Mr. Bright of which hitherto no record has been preserved.

The subject of our biography has always taken a deep interest in the education question, and it was in connection with this question that his friendship with Mr. Cobden arose. Mr. Bright detailed the circumstances in his address at Bradford, when unveiling the Cobden statue. 'I went over to Manchester,' he said, 'to ask him if he would be kind enough to come to Rochdale and to speak at an education meeting which was about to be held in the schoolroom of the Baptist chapel in West Street of that town. I found him in his office in Mosley Street. I introduced myself to him I told him what I wanted. His countenance lit up with pleasure to find that there were others who were working in this question, and he, without hesitation, agreed to come. He came, and he spoke; and although he was then so young as a speaker, yet the qualities of his speech were such as remained with him so long as he was able to speak at all—clearness, logic, a conversational eloquence, a persuasiveness which, when conjoined with the absolute truth there was in his eye and in his countenance, it was almost impossible to resist.' After the Rochdale meeting, Mr. Cobden spent the night at the house of Mr. Jacob Bright, and from that time forward was established a friendship between the Anti-Corn Law leader and John Bright, which gathered in intimacy, and lasted, unbroken and undisturbed by a single jar of any kind, during the long period of twenty-five years. The two friends came to be known, in fact, as the

Jonathan and David of the League, and the comparison was far from being inapt.

In the year 1836 Mr. Bright stepped into the field of controversy on the question of the factory operatives. Factory legislation is one of those subjects upon which the right hon. gentleman has suffered from misrepresentation. On account of certain views which he held upon factory labour, he has been charged with being the enemy of the poor and overworked operative. Nothing could be further from the fact; nor was he opposed to remedial legislation on behalf of children in factories. The truth is, that the factory reformers, in propounding their schemes of amelioration, proposed to prohibit the labour of adult women as much as the labour of young persons under eighteen years of age; and as mills could not be worked without a certain proportion of female labour, the consequence of such a step would be to limit the labour of men in the same manner and in the same degree. On this point, therefore, of the employment of adult female labour, Mr. Bright supported the view that no compulsion should be used. In the year above mentioned, Mr. John Fielden, M.P. for Oldham, issued a pamphlet entitled *The Curse of the Factory System.* To this pamphlet Mr. Bright put forth a reply, and we have now his observations before us. It was not the author's intention to show that the factory operatives could without injury continue to labour for the same number of hours that they had been doing, nor did he attempt to prove that the employers were free from blame in the great question of factory labour. Mr. Fielden, in his pamphlet, enlarged upon the cruelties practised towards factory apprentices, and quoted statements from Sir R. Peel's speech in 1816 to prove the heartlessness of the employers. He also gave extracts from the evidence taken before the Commissioners of 1833 to prove that these enormities still existed, and that the same relentless spirit and love of gain actuated the manufacturers. Granting that a strong case had been made out for legislative interference, Mr. Bright regretted that the cause had been advocated in an unworthy manner, and in a vindictive spirit towards those who had already legislated upon the question. Mr. Bright proved that Mr. Poulett Thompson's proposed bill would not re-enslave 35,867 children, as asserted by Mr. Fielden, and further showed that Ministers had not opposed Lord Ashley's Ten Hours' Bill because it did not afford protection to children, but because it interfered with the labour of adults. The writer then went on to answer Mr. Fielden point by point upon

details connected with the management of factories, and the system pursued towards the operatives. He (Mr. Bright) applauded that man who endeavoured to rescue the operative from a situation in many respects injurious to the full development of his faculties, and hostile to the amelioration of his moral and physical condition; but this could never be done by a statement in which those whose intentions were equally good with the author's were loaded with obloquy, and in which greatly exaggerated statements were made for the sole end of exciting commiseration.

Mr. Bright then came to Mr. Fielden's remarks, as follows, upon foreign competition: 'If I am told that that which is necessary to be done is that we should manufacture in England so cheaply that no people engaged in like pursuits can *undersell* us in any market in the world, my answer is that the customers in those markets will take good care that we do this, and therefore we need have no concern on that score.' He was at a loss to conceive what this meant; and if the writer had failed to convince, he had certainly puzzled his readers. Whilst he was attempting to convince us of the folly of the ideas we had entertained upon foreign competition, he proved beyond doubt that either we must manufacture as cheaply as our rivals, or we must lose our customers in foreign markets. And yet we were at the same time told that foreign competition was a fallacy, a bugbear! The author of *The Curse of the Factory System*, though unconscious of any evil to be suffered from foreign competition, is continually haunted by the belief that we are on the brink of destruction, and that a rapid and appalling decline is taking place as to our foreign trade in our manufacturing pursuits, because we are returning to the Americans a larger quantity of cloth in exchange for the quantity of cotton we receive from them than we were doing a few years ago.' Mr. Bright demonstrated by statistics the fallacy of this argument, and proceeded to remark that, upon the hypothesis of Mr. Fielden, every increase of consumption in this country had only served to accelerate its ruin, by bringing us nearer upon the heels of the cotton grower; and thus at length the very causes to which the world had attributed our unexampled wealth and prosperity had been discovered by the sagacity of the hon. member for Oldham to be those which had all along been hurrying us unconsciously to our ruin. As a sovereign remedy for these imaginary disasters, a reduction of the time of labour to ten hours was prescribed; and this specific was not only to protect the children, but to serve as a

regulator to production, and to prevent stocks from increasing in the market. Now, the protection of children was a good ground for demanding a reduction in the hours of labour, but he strongly protested against the principle that trade would be benefited by any interference on the part of the Government as to production, stock, etc. Mr. Fielden had also taken upon himself to defend the landowner; and in sketching the history of the tax upon corn, Mr. Bright remarked that while a poor man with a large family probably consumed more corn than the rich man with a family equally numerous, yet instead of paying less in corn-tax, he must necessarily pay more than the rich man, whilst at the same time the rich man was receiving all the benefit of the monopoly.

The Corn Laws, he maintained, were the principal curse of the operative, and the curse of the factory system had in great measure its origin in the effects of those laws. If the advocates of the Ten Hours' Bill were to demand the abolition of the unholy monopoly in corn at the same time that they called for a reduction in the hours of labour, they would stand upon firmer ground. The whole country would then take up the cause of the factory operative. The writer fully and entirely agreed with Mr. Fielden and Mr. Greg that a reduction in the hours of labour was most important to the health of the manufacturing population, and absolutely necessary to any general and material amelioration in their moral and intellectual condition; and he envied neither the head nor the heart of that man who could live amongst the factory operatives of Lancashire without perceiving the injurious effects of the long hours and close confinement to which they were subjected, and without feeling an ardent desire to assist in improving their condition.

This is not the language of an opponent of factory reform. Mr. Bright further said that the day had happily gone by when it was necessary to argue whether it was the duty of Government to aid in this work; and he combated the idea that such a course would be an infringement of the liberty of the subject and the legitimate employment of capital, or that it would so far interfere with the principles of Free Trade as to be undesirable and pernicious. He argued these points at length; and with regard to the evidence taken before the Committee of the House of Commons on the treatment of young persons in factories, he thought no reasonable or humane man would refuse his assent to the proposition that a case had been made out which called for the interference of the Legislature. Touching upon the legislation which had come into operation

on the 1st of March preceding (1836), he pointed out the causes of its failure. Experience had taught, and every one acquainted with the factory question knew, that the adults in a mill could not work twelve hours while the children only worked ten—one class depending so much upon the other; and that whatever restrictions were imposed upon the one, would be equally binding upon the other. They must therefore fix a time during which both children and adults should work, and which limit should not be exceeded by either. The Act would then be so simple that evasion would be impossible. Mill-owners themselves were to blame for much of the excitement that had arisen, as they had held themselves aloof from all sound legislation on the subject. Mr. Bright concluded by suggesting a practical compromise, which should at once show the willingness of the millowners to consult the welfare of the operatives, and at the same time content the operatives themselves, and materially improve their condition. He finally exhorted the millowners to cast aside selfish considerations, and adopt the just and sound maxim, 'That the interests of all classes are so intimately blended, that none can suffer without injury being inflicted upon the rest, and that the true interest of each will be found to be advanced by those measures which conduce to the prosperity of the whole.'

In the above observations we have the first expression of Mr. Bright's views on the Corn Laws. One of his leading points—that the abrogation of these laws would be of inestimable advantage to the working classes—has been strikingly fulfilled. Under the *régime* of Free Trade, the English workman has better wages, better food, and fewer hours of labour. There is, in fact, no act of the legislature to which we could point which has done so much for the comfort and improvement of the working classes as the repeal of the Corn Laws.

In and before the year 1837, the Tories were making strenuous efforts to regain their power in the country. The time was regarded as an anxious one by all reformers, who were most desirous not to lose what they had acquired since 1832. It was, therefore, during a period of considerable political perturbation that Mr. Bright put forth an address, dated January 31st, 1837, 'To the Radical Reformers of the Borough of Rochdale.' The address was anonymous, and we quote from the only copy of it probably which is in existence. It began by pointing out the important juncture which had arrived in political affairs, and the necessity laid upon every man to range himself with one of the two great parties strug-

gling for the mastery. The writer then continued: 'By the tories the government of this country has been conducted for fifty years at least, previous to 1830; and I presume I need not go at length into their doings to persuade you to unite with me in opinion, that the profligate waste of public money, the shameless system of jobbery and corruption, which has grown up under their rule, has no parallel in the history of any people pretending to the possession of a representative government. The Tories wish to continue this system; and on every side we behold the extraordinary exertions they are now making to regain possession of the power which has been so lately, and with so much difficulty, wrested from them. Compared with the mass of the nation, their number is inconsiderable; they are, however, formidable from their wealth, and still more so from the untiring activity which they display in the prosecution of their nefarious projects. In the House of Commons they are in a minority, but they count there upwards of three hundred members. In the Lords their principles are omnipotent, and the peers are straining every nerve to regain their ascendancy in the Commons. The majority which the very best measures of the Ministry can command is by no means great, and hence will be seen at once the importance which is now attached to the acquisition of a single vote by either contending parties.'

The young and ardent elector then turned to the condition of politics in his native town of Rochdale. Nowhere had Toryism shown itself in more detestable colours than in that borough. The writer thus observed upon their conduct with respect to the church-rate question: 'You will recollect, no doubt, that when they found themselves unable to obtain a rate from the assembled parishioners, they proceeded to levy one for which they had no authority; that by dint of coaxing some and bullying others they succeeded in obtaining some payments; that they seized the goods of those who would not submit to church-warden law, and attempted to sell them by auction, but found no purchasers, except amongst the wretched hangers-on of their own desperate party, and the vile refuse that infested the purlieus of the police courts; that they entered the cottage of the poor, the aged, and the dying (oh, how they love the poor!), and did not hesitate to take away the family Bible to satisfy the unholy cravings of the Church: yes, they scrupled not to take from a poor and virtuous man, when extended on the bed of death, that Book from which he might have drawn consolation in the hour of trial, when all the efforts

of human nature are unable to sustain the mind, and when religion alone can give solace and relief. And this deed, than which the records of the Inquisition show none more foul, was perpetrated in the cause of—shall I say Religion?—no, but in the cause and by agents of the Established Church. Well may it be said, "Oh, Religion! what crimes have been committed in thy name!"'

At the previous election for Rochdale there were feastings and revelry at the public-houses, and there was a sensation of horror 'which filled every well-disposed mind when all the engines of demoralization were brought into play to sway the votes of the electors of the borough, when your streets almost ran down with the liquor which robbed the poor deluded creatures who partook of it of their senses; whilst those who infamously furnished it were plundering them of their political rights. You remember that this abominable system sent more than one solitary victim to a premature grave, and that human life itself was not deemed an offering too costly for the altar of political and social depravity.'

'The recent conduct of the Tories in Parliament is well known to you. Allow me just to remind you that they deem you wholly unqualified to exercise the right of voting with propriety; that they struggled long and hard to prevent the extension of the franchise by the Reform Bill, and that, if occasion offered, they would undoubtedly deprive you of the franchise; that they refuse to allow you any protection for your vote, and will not grant the ballot, which would rescue many electors from their control; that they approve of seven years' Parliaments, so that the responsibility under which the representative is held to the electors may be as slight as possible; that they support the odious Corn Law by which you are now paying at least fifty per cent. more for your bread than bread of equal quality may be bought for in Paris or Brussels, whilst at the same time foreign States, in retaliation, refuse to admit your goods; thus at once raising the cost of the chief necessary of life, and preventing you from obtaining money to purchase it; that they refuse to yield any one of the just demands of Dissenters, and are determined that you shall still pay the support of a Church whose services you do not attend, and whose clergy you almost invariably find ranged on the side of your inveterate enemies.'

The writer went on to say that he had drawn once more this old indictment because the Tories were endeavouring to regain possession of their old power. They hoped to make a powerful

assistant in this deeply-laid scheme of the Poor Law Amendment Bill. Mr. Bright traced the depravity and wretchedness which existed under the old Poor Laws. A new law had been passed, which on the whole had worked well, and it would be as wise to ask for the repeal of the Reform Bill because riot and bloodshed had taken place at an election in a single borough, as to demand the repeal of the Poor Law on the ground that some few cases of hardship had occurred in carrying its provisions into effect. The Poor Law Amendment Bill was a great and momentous experiment which deserved a fair trial. Now, were the Tories in power, they could not repeal this Act, and their outcry against it was merely a stratagem by which they hoped to create discord amongst reformers. The new law could not work in towns so great a change as it would in the agricultural unions, for in the former places the administration of the old Poor Law was probably as near perfection as it was possible to have it. The writer then briefly sketched the operation of the leading clauses of the Act, and replied to Mr. Fielden's suggestion that no Radical should support any candidate for the representation of the borough who refused to pledge himself to vote for the absolute repeal of the bill. The Tory party had really no fixed opinions upon the measure, but merely used it as a stalking-horse, using it differently in different boroughs. He next referred to the threatened divisions amongst the Liberals; and of the Liberal candidate then before the constituency, Mr. Fenton, remarked that he was a friend to household suffrage, the ballot, and short Parliaments; and that he was in favor of the abolition of the Corn Laws, Church-rates, and abuses of every description. All these points of agreement far outweighed any accordance of opinion which might exist on the single question of the Poor Law Amendment Bill. It was unfortunate that the working classes were inclined to listen to the Tories in this matter. Did they suppose that the Tories had in view the real welfare of the labouring classes, and that the tiger-like character of Toryism had all at once softened down into the mildness of the lamb? One of their most loquacious converts had lately made the notable discovery that 'the Bible is pre-eminently a Tory book;' but did they suppose that a book which contained the injunction 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you,' and which specially denounced all those that oppressed the poor, could in any way justify a party which had invariably sacrificed the masses for the purposes of self-aggrandisement, and which dared by the iniquitous Corn Law to arrest the course of heaven, which showered

down plenty upon the human race? 'The Tories had invariably oppressed the people; they had won their confidence only to betray them; and yet, with an effrontery which was perfectly unmatched, they persisted in claiming credit for the best intentions. 'Reformers of Rochdale! you will in all probability soon have an opportunity of redeeming the character of your town, and of wiping off the disgrace of being misrepresented by a man whose inefficiency in Parliament is a fitting sequel to the foul and detestable means which were employed to send him there. If you neglect this opportunity, if from unyielding obstinacy on any one point you are content to sacrifice all the rest, then the deep stigma will cling to you as a poisoned garment, and the very stones of your streets will cry shame upon you.'

Rochdale did not neglect its opportunities in the sense indicated by the address. At the previous election of 1835, Mr. Bright had addressed the electors on behalf of the Liberal candidate in vain. Now, in 1837, the position was reversed. Mr. Fenton, the Liberal candidate, was elected by 374 votes, or a majority of 25 over his opponent, Mr. Ramsay.

Mr. Bright's early connection with the Corn Law agitation we shall reserve for separate treatment. It is interesting, however, to note here that in 1840 we find him taking the chair at a great open-air meeting held at Rochdale, when a congratulatory address to Her Majesty upon her marriage was adopted, and three enthusiastic cheers were given for the young Queen. It is not a little singular that although Mr. Bright has frequently been regarded as a Republican in many quarters, he has invariably spoken of his Sovereign with the greatest respect and esteem; and we have already seen that when a young man, and a member of the Rochdale Literary Society, he brought forward a motion in favour of a limited monarchy.

The question of church-rates in Rochdale for many years led to scenes of excitement and agitation scarcely paralleled by those arising in connection with any other subject. In the month of June, 1834, the usual meeting of the parishioners was convened to pass the accounts of the retiring churchwardens, and to consider the propriety of making a rate for the ensuing year. For some time before this a rate of one penny in the pound had been granted, which the wardens had applied to the repairs of the church. But as it was believed that church-rates were about to be abolished, it was resolved to collect this year a magnificent sum. The wardens boldly demanded two-pence-halfpenny in the pound, and to make this extravagant

demand appear less glaring they placed amongst the supposed expenses a sum of £90 for a hearse. This hearse was to be only free to the paupers, the rest of the parish having to pay for it when occasion demanded its use, though the wardens wished them to buy it in the first instance. This sum, together with the salaries of the ringers, organist, etc., absorbed almost the whole of the rate, leaving very little for the repairs of the church, for which only church-rates should be lawfully collected. The parishioners were determined not to submit to the rate, and a resolution was passed adjourning the meeting to the 23d of June, 1835. The wardens demanded a poll, which resulted in a majority of 147 against them, notwithstanding the efforts of the Church party, who spared no pains to bring the voters up, and who in some instances paid the rates due from individuals in order to qualify them to vote for the rate. But in defiance of the clearly expressed wishes of the parish, the wardens proceeded to lay a rate, which, by means of persuasion in some cases and threats in others, was paid in some instances. Many refused to pay, however, and these were summoned before the magistrates, who decided that they had no jurisdiction. The Consistory Court of Chester was then put into operation, but the defendants contended that the proceedings of the wardens were illegal, as only eight out of the ten wardens of the parish had joined in the suit. The Chancellor of the Court overruled the objection, and commanded the defendants to appear absolutely, upon which the latter appealed to the Archbishop's Court at York. The York Chancellor decided that all the wardens must join in the suit, and reversed the decision of the Chester court, discharging the defendants from the citations. To show the spirit in which the churchwardens conducted this contest, we need only refer to the case mentioned by Mr. Bright, in which they had seized upon, and actually sold, the Bible of a poor old man, then on his death-bed, to satisfy the rate.

Bitter feelings were engendered in the town, and these were not allayed for years. We have cited the above facts in the church-rate controversy partly to show the spirit that prevailed amongst the official defenders of the rates, and partly because they lead up to one of the most spirited and able speeches delivered by Mr. Bright before taking his seat in the House of Commons. In July, 1840, a rate having been decided upon at a meeting of ratepayers, its opponents demanded a poll. At its close, it was found that 3,976 had voted for the rate, and 4,060 against it. The Church party immediately called another meeting for the 29th of July, for the purpose of laying

another rate. On the day named St. Chad's Church was densely crowded. Mr. Bright and others took up a position in the reading desk, amidst the cheers of their friends; but at length, on account of those not able to procure admittance, it was decided to hold the meeting in the church-yard. In a few moments about six thousand persons were assembled in this last resting-place of the dead. A rate of a halfpenny was proposed, a statement by the vicar's churchwarden to the effect that the foundations of the steeple and the church were unsafe, and giving way, not unnaturally causing some laughter.

Mr. Bright then proposed an amendment 'That no church-rate be granted before the 30th day of July, 1841, and that this meeting stand adjourned to that day.'* Touching first upon the legal aspect of the question, the speaker showed that the law did not, and could not, compel the inhabitants of a parish to make a rate. Lord Denman and four other judges had unanimously decided that the power to make a church-rate existed only in the parishioners. With regard to the vicar's statement that it was the *intention* of the law that a rate should be laid, Mr. Bright first showed the groundlessness of this, and then effectively turned the tables upon Dr. Molesworth. 'Once on a time,' he said, 'it was ordered by law that whenever a clergyman came into possession of a living, he was to pay over the first year's income to a fund for extending the usefulness of the Church. At that time the vicarage of Rochdale was worth under £100 per year, and the first-fruits were paid on that amount. Now, was it not the *intention* of the law that in all future time the first year's income should be devoted to the purpose I have just mentioned? Certainly it was. But what does the vicar, and the rest of his brethren, in the Church? Has he paid, or does he intend to pay, his first year's income; or will he content himself by paying under £100 to that useful fund? How does he satisfy his conscience that he is obeying the *intention* of the law?' Mr. Bright then alluded to the coercion which had been used towards workmen to make them vote for the rate, and asked what language could express his indignation at such conduct. 'You have the form of man, you may have the faculties of man, you may claim the right which your Creator has conferred upon you; but if you are thus coerced, if your judgment and your conscience are thus violated, if your own and your neighbours' interests are struck at and wounded through the

* There is a copy of this speech by Mr. Bright, printed on a crown folio sheet, and corrected from the *Manchester Times*, in the Rochdale Free Public Library.

very privileges which the law has guaranteed you for their defence,—then you are no longer men; you may crouch and confess yourselves slaves.' The speaker next touched upon the vicar's policy. Notwithstanding his great income, he and his brother-clergymen generally unblushingly charged for administering the sacraments of their Church.

Ebenezer Elliott, the impassioned bard of a great movement, was then pressed into his service by Mr. Bright. 'The vicar has published a handbill, a copy of which I hold in my hands; he quotes Scripture in favor of a rate, and a greater piece of hardihood cannot be imagined: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," leaving out the latter part of the sentence. I will give you my opinion of the applicability of this passage in a quotation from our excellent friend, the people's poet, Ebenezer Elliott. He says:

> "When palaced paupers, sneering, beard the town,
> They preach the Church Tax in a text like this—
> No text more plain—'To Cæsar give his own?'
> Ah, serviles, knavishly the mark they miss,
> And give to Cæsar *ours*—not *theirs*, nor *his!*"

I hold that to quote Scripture in defence of church-rate is the very height of rashness. The New Testament teems with passages inculcating peace, brotherly love, mutual forbearance, charity, disregard of filthy lucre, and devotedness to the welfare of our fellow-men. In the exaction of church-rates, in the seizure of the goods of the members of his flock, in the imprisonment of those who refuse to pay, in the harassing process of law and injustice in the Church courts, in the stirrings-up of strife and bitterness among the parishioners,—in all this a clergyman violates the precepts he is paid to preach, and affords a mournful proof of the infirmity or wickedness of human nature. Pointing to the church near, Mr. Bright thus concluded his address:—

'Fellow-townsmen, I look on that old building—that venerable building, for its antiquity gives it a venerable air—with a feeling of pain. I behold it as a witness of ages gone by, as one of the numberless monuments of the piety or zeal of our ancestors, as a connecting link between this and former ages. I could look on it with a feeling of affection, did I not know that it forms the centre of that source of discord with which our neighbourhood has for years been afflicted, and did it not seem the genial bed wherein strife and bitter jarrings were perpetually produced to spread their baneful influence over this densely-peopled parish. I would that that venerable fabric were the representative of a really reformed Church—of a Church separated from the foul connection with the State—of a Church depending upon her own resources, upon the zeal of her people, upon the truthfulness of her principles, and upon the blessings of her spiritual Head! Then would the Church be really free from

her old vices; then would she run a career of brighter and still brightening glory; then would she unite heart and hand with her sister Churches in this kingdom, in the great and glorious work of evangelizing the people of this great empire, and of every clime throughout the world. My friends, the time is coming when a State Church will be unknown in England, and it rests with you to accelerate or retard that happy consummation. I call upon you to gird yourselves for the contest which is impending, for the hour of conflict is approaching when the people of England will be arbiters of their own fate,—when they will have to choose between civil and religious liberty, or the iron hoof, the mental thraldom of a hireling State priesthood. Men of Rochdale, do your duty! You know what becomes you! Maintain the great principles you profess to hold dear; unite with me in a firm resolve that under no possible circumstances will you ever pay a church-rate; and whatever may await you, prove that good and holy principles can nerve the heart; and ultimately our cause, your cause, the world's cause, shall triumph gloriously.'

Mr. Bright's amendment was carried by a large majority. The Church party demanded a poll. The contest lasted many days; acrimonious attacks were indulged in by both parties; and the most strenuous exertions were made by each. At the close of the last day's poll but one, there appeared 5,216 for the rate, and 5,212 against. The excitement, consequently, on the following day was completely unexampled in the history of Rochdale. It is stated that votes were on sale to the highest bidder. The 79th Highlanders appeared with fixed bayonets in front of the National School, and this military demonstration led to stone-throwing by the crowd. Mr. Bright, fearful of a rupture between the people and the troops, endeavoured to dissuade the former from violence, but could not be heard. The vicar announced that he should prolong the polling for an hour, but Mr. Bright protested against this, and said that he should object to certain votes which had been taken from persons who had not paid their rates. Dr. Molesworth read the result of the poll as follows: For the rate, 6,694; against, 6,581—majority, 113. This was disputed by the anti-rate party, who claimed a majority of seven. More meetings were held, and at one of them Mr. Bright asked what a savage would think of the religion of the English people, if he had seen one of its ministers, on the previous Saturday night, conducted through the streets by a civil magistrate and the police, amidst the shouts and yells, hissing and hooting, of the insulted people? The very man who should have been the minister of peace, and inculcated goodwill towards men, had embroiled this extensive parish in almost civil war. At this time there were some in Mr. Bright's employ who had voted in favour of the rate, when some of their fellow-workmen attempted to coerce them; but Mr. Bright interfered, and said that Churchmen had a right to their own opinions, and to vote as they liked. Ultimately, after legal and other pro-

ceedings, the vicar found the opposition too strong for him, and church-rates in Rochdale were abandoned.

Mr. Bright for some time employed his pen, as well as his voice, in advocating such reforms as he deemed desirable. The Rev. Dr. Molesworth having launched a periodical under the title of 'Common Sense, or Everybody's Magazine,' an opposition serial was commenced, with the covertly sarcastic title of 'The Vicar's Lantern.' The most frequent contributors to the latter magazine were Mr. Bright and Mr. Oliver Ormerod. Mr. Ormerod, who was one of Mr. Bright's earliest friends, was the author of a very racy book on a visit to the Great Exhibition of 1851, written in the Rochdale dialect. It is referred to now as one of the best specimens of Lancashire humour. In 'The Vicar's Lantern,' Mr. Bright severely handled the articles which appeared in the vicar's magazine. 'The general question of the Corn Law is not to be interfered with,' he wrote on one occasion. 'Of course not. To withhold a few pence of an illegal church-rate is an offence which cries to heaven and demands a pamphlet, but to withhold bread from millions of honest men and their families is a general question of no immediate importance.' Again, 'An Act of Uniformity, made by weak and erring mortals to bind the human mind for ever, is a monstrous thing. Are mankind to stand still? Are all things to change and to advance, and man alone to rest content with ignorance and superstition and imperfection? Is a parchment church, whilst it drains the purse, to perpetuate error, and to shun as a pestilence the discovery of truth? Is custom to be venerated because it is old, or ought we not rather to affirm with Cyprian that custom without truth is but agedness of error?' Now the Bishops come under his lash. 'When the aristocracy of Britain were draining the country which has so long been afflicted by the pressure of their iron heel, for the purpose of exterminating the germs of liberty in continental Europe, the whole bench of Bishops, with one honourable exception, were their firm allies, and their votes were ever ready in behalf of the war which was desolating the fairest portions of the civilized world.' 'When the question of the abolition of that infamous and accursed traffic in human flesh, the African slave trade, was proposed, it met with great opposition from the bench of Bishops. Their conduct on one occasion drew from Lord Eldon the cutting sarcasm that "the slave trade could not be opposed to Christianity and the precepts of the Gospel, seeing that it was uniformly supported by the right reverend prelates."' The writer further observed that he was

not surprised the clergy should hate the Anti-Corn Law League, for 'the League is the foe of aristocratic injustice, and the State Church is the creature and tool of the aristocracy.' The following passage must have been particularly distressing to Dr. Molesworth: 'We doubt not that the munificent contribution made in this town to the Great League Fund has had an effect the reverse of soothing upon the nerves of the bread-taxing Vicar of Rochdale. When men refuse at all hazards to pay church-rates, and yet cheerfully contribute upwards of £2,000 to an Anti-Corn Law League, it indicates a degree of alienation from the "Political Church" which must shock the feelings of every well-paid and comfortable dignitary who nestles within its ample folds. And so it is in Rochdale.'

Whether it was that the Vicar of Rochdale relished the written comments of Mr. Bright upon public and local questions as little as he did his eloquent verbal comments, does not appear, but at any rate 'Common Sense'—the magazine we mean, we are not now discussing the quality—disappeared. The opposition journal followed suit in a few months, the editor in its epitaph remarking, 'We rejoice that amidst the dangers and difficulties that have beset our path we are at length enabled in peaceful triumph to place the extinguisher with our own hand upon the "Vicar's Lantern."' This grappling with local questions had not been without its uses—leading to quickness of intellectual fence,—but still sterner work than crushing local opponents was soon to demand Mr. Bright's attention.

Towards the close of 1839 Mr. Bright was married to Miss Elizabeth Priestman, daughter of Mr. Jonathan Priestman, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. By this lady he had one daughter, Helen, who married Mr. W. S. Clarke, of Street, in Somersetshire. Mrs. Bright died in the year 1841, and was buried in the graveyard belonging to the Friends at Rochdale. While sorrowing under this heavy bereavement he again saw Mr. Cobden, and their meeting has thus been described, with simple pathos, by Mr. Bright:—'At that time I was at Leamington, and on the day when Mr. Cobden called on me—for he happened to be there at the same time on a visit to some relations—I was in the depth of grief, I might almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called on me as my friend, and addressed me as you might suppose with words of condolence. After a time, he looked up and said, "There are

thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now when the first paroxysm of your grief is past I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn Law is repealed."' The untiring and devoted manner in which this appeal was responded to we shall hereafter see.

In the same year as his first marriage, Mr. Bright built his residence of One Ash, Rochdale. The reason for this curious designation is very simply explained. Near the house is a single tree, an ash, and the name was adopted in remembrance of his ancestor, John Gratton, of Monyash, in Derbyshire. At this place, and amidst congenial pursuits, he has, at the close of each session, sought recreation and the renewal of that physical health which of recent years has been seriously encroached upon by the pressure of his public duties.

CHAPTER III.

ELECTED FOR DURHAM.

Mr. Bright's first Election Contest.—Cause of his non-success.—His Opponent, Lord Dungannon.—Mr. Bright the Popular Candidate.—Lord Dungannon unseated.—Second Election in July, 1843.—A singular Conservative Candidate.—Mr. Bright's Election Addresses.—Scene at the Hustings.—Election Pleasantries.—Return of Mr. Bright.—A Free-Trade Triumph.—Rejoicings.—Great Meeting in London.

The able and vigorous part which Mr. Bright took in the Anti-Corn Law agitation naturally led to the conclusion amongst his friends that he must have a seat in Parliament. By the year 1842 it began to be apparent that he would be a power in public life. 'He is earnest, argumentative, eloquent,' said one who spoke with prophetic instinct, 'clear in statement, apt in illustration, fluent in words, abundant in resources. Mr. John Bright is in talent a second Peel; he was born in the same atmosphere. Let his career be observed—he has entered upon it.' Men should generally distrust prophecies, but there was plenty of ground for this one. Mr. Bright had already impressed both his friends and his foes with a sense of his power. If Mr. Cobden might be described as the Paul, Mr. Bright was certainly the Apollos, of the League.

The opportunity of contesting a seat in the Legislature came sooner than was anticipated. In March, 1843, Captain Fitzroy, member for the city of Durham, resigned his seat in consequence of having accepted the appointment of Governor of New Zealand. An address from Lord Dungannon, in the Protectionist and Conservative interest, immediately appeared. It seemed as though his lordship would enjoy a walk-over, but only on the very day of the nomination an address to the electors from Mr. Bright was published. It was written in plain and forcible language, pointing out the special reasons why the representation of the city should be contested. The paragraph which attracted most attention in this first election address of the future statesman was the following: 'I need not allude to the attempt which is making to degrade you into the convenient tool of an aristocratic family—to employ your suffrages to place a man in Parliament as a stepping-stone to

the governorship of a colony, and then to hand you over, as it were by "private contract," to another, who in his address considers your sentiments and your judgment of so little importance that he does not even condescend to explain the principles by which his political course will be guided! It is for you to determine whether you will become an instrument for the exaltation of those who have no interests or sympathies in common with your own; or whether you will assert your right to be a free and independent constituency, using your electoral power to maintain the liberties and protect the interests of yourselves and of your country.'

Lord Dungannon had been canvassing for a week, whereas Mr. Bright's canvass barely extended over the space of two hours and a half, before he met his friends to depart for the hustings. The nomination took place on April 3, when a crowd of four thousand persons assembled in front of the hustings, the Liberal candidate being accompanied by troops of friends. After the nominations had been completed, Lord Dungannon, who was a nominee of the Marquis of Londonderry, first addressed the electors, the burden of his speech being that they knew his principles, and that he had no new pledges to offer. Mr. Bright then stepped forward, and being manifestly the popular candidate, he was received with great cheering. 'I come before you,' he said, after one or two preliminary remarks, 'more particularly as an opponent of every description of monopoly, but still more particularly of that most infamous of all monopolies which obstructs the supply of food to the people of this country, for the sole purpose of aggrandizing a class. I believe that that class is mistaken, and that the time will come when they will see that injustice to other classes of their countrymen will not, in the long run, benefit their own. But this law is calculated, I am persuaded, to inflict the most appalling suffering upon the great body of the working classes.' He demanded their support for any man who came forward to break down this monopoly, and expressed his great surprise that Lord Dungannon had not uttered one word upon the great question that was already exciting more interest than any other among the intelligent portion of the population. He then proceeded to show the evils of the protective system, which the noble lord supported. 'At this moment there are thirteen hundred thousand paupers in England and Wales. The mover of the noble lord (Prebendary Townsend) spoke of this country as being a great and a free and a prosperous and a wealthy nation. Another gentleman, who is also of the profession of the hon. mover, told us not

long ago that there are five millions of our countrymen living on oats, and that five millions are *rejoicing* on potatoes. If Lord Dungannon were sent to Parliament, he would again say "aye" to any motion to keep up the price of the working man's bread, whilst nothing would be done to keep up the rate of his wages. Now, if there be not food for all, some must go short—and they must be the working classes, and the poorest of those classes; while if the repeal of the Corn Law were followed by five or ten millions of quarters entering the country, there would be plenty for all—not one need go short; and instead of rejoicing in oats and potatoes, all might rejoice in wheaten bread. Men were almost fighting with each other for employment and wages and food.' 'And no power under heaven can diminish that competition, or give increased comfort, or cause a steady demand for labour, unless it be the repeal of that law which diminishes the demand for labour, reduces wages, makes you compete with each other constantly and of necessity, and turns the whole force and beggary of this competition into the means of increasing the rental of the noble lords and landlords who made that law.'

This and other passages of Mr. Bright's speech were received with rapturous cheering. After some further observations, the following episode occurred:

'The noble lord comes forward on "free and independent principles" (*Much laughter.*) There is no one more in favour of those principles than I am. But I hold that freedom and that independence to be a freedom and an independence of all outward influence, and a perfect reliance upon the good opinion of the whole of the constituency. Now, I am afraid that, being a stranger here, I may have misunderstood the facts; but I gather there has been something like a contract, by which the electors of this renowned and ancient borough are made subservient to the interests of a certain aristocratic family. [Loud cheers, and cries of "No" and "Yes," in the midst of which Lord Dungannon spoke a few words to Mr. Bright across the Mayor.] The noble lord says there is no such contract. I do not for one moment mean to say that it is any matter of writing, or that there is any direct contract. I merely mean to say that there is a sort of understanding.'

Lord Dungannon. 'Does the gentleman now opposed to me—— [Cries of "Order, order!" and a remark, "Wait till Mr. Bright has done, and then reply."] If the gentleman now opposed to me asserts that I am come here under any contract from any man, or dependent upon any man, I say that he asserts that which is totally destitute of foundation.' [Cheers, hissing, and a voice said, 'You know it's true.']

Mr. Bright. 'I have read with very great amusement and interest the addresses which have been published. One of them was published by your late member, in which he speaks of the many sad reflections occasioned by his appointment; so sad, that I do not think any one in your Assize Courts, going out to New Zealand, could have written in more plaintive terms. (*Great laughter.*) I do not wish to insinuate for a moment that there has been anything in the way of bargain and sale of the constituency: but I do say that the whole transaction makes it evident that there are some parties who think

it is not a difficult matter to transfer the constituency of Durham from one candidate to another.'

Mr. Bright went on to say that he was in favour of such laws as should prevent honest and sober and industrious men from sinking from a state of independence into poverty and pauperism and degradation. He liked prevention infinitely better than cure. The speaker then said he felt convinced that grave calamities were impending over the country, unless representatives were sent to Parliament to support the principles which he had been advocating. 'I confidently hope,' he said in conclusion, 'not so much on my own account as on account of the principles I hold, that by to-morrow evening you will have told the world that you are not in favour of monopoly; that you will uphold no protection which, stripped of all its ambiguity, is plain and simple robbery of one class for the benefit of another; that you are willing to co-operate with Nottingham (where I hope the electors will this week do their duty by returning a free-trader to Parliament—Mr. Gisborne, who will be known to many of you); and that the voice you and they shall raise against the giant evil of your country shall spread through the length and breadth of the island and the empire, and pronounce that the reign of monopoly, of oppression, of disregard to the rights of the working classes, and of total subserviency to an oligarchy which has brought this mischief on the country,—pronounce that that reign is absolutely and for ever at an end.'

The cheering which followed was most protracted, and for some minutes the Mayor was not able to call for a show of hands. The demonstration in favour of Lord Dungannon was a mere sprinkling in the crowd, while for Mr. Bright it appeared as if the whole assemblage had simultaneously held up their hands. The Tories demanded a poll, which was fixed to take place on the following day. A local journal observed that the account of the proceedings ought not to be closed 'without a strong animadversion on the ungentlemanly conduct of Lord Dungannon's friends while Mr. Bright was speaking. It showed down-right ill-breeding, and an utter determination to conduct the struggle with recklessness of principle and gross discourtesy to an honorable opponent.' The result of the poll proved that while Mr. Bright had excited a strong feeling in his favour, he had come forward too late to win the seat. The numbers were: for Lord Dungannon, 507; for Mr. Bright, 405; majority, 102. At the close of the poll, Mr. Bright addressed the people in the market-place. Amidst general applause, he

said he affirmed with confidence that if he had been in the field as long as the noble lord, the result of the poll would have been very different. A large majority of the electors were liberal in principle, and in favour of Free Trade. Referring to the attitude of the clergy on the question of the Corn Laws, he said, 'It is a most unhappy circumstance that any body of men holding their position in society, assuming sacred functions, professing themselves the ministers of the purest system of morality and religion ever known upon earth, men who call upon you to leave the grovelling things of earth, and all the miserable dross and tinsel by which you are surrounded; to direct your thoughts to higher and holier objects; to carry your aspirations towards heaven rather than stoop to the things of earth,—I say it is a misfortune that by a law made by the Parliament of the country, this body of men, especially appointed to take charge of the flock, should, instead of being the shepherds, appear to all men's eyes as the shearers of the flock; and that their enormous influence should, in almost all the parishes of England, be bound up in the conservation of the most odious, the most unjust, the most oppressive, and the most destructive enactment which was ever recorded upon the statute-book of this or any other country.'

Mr. Bright closed by thanking the electors, and tendering them friendly counsels, especially warning them against those who might corrupt the constituency. He then proceeded to his hotel. His enthusiastic reception induced him there to enter the balcony 'with the intention of once more, in a few words, bidding his friends farewell; but the eagerness of his auditory, who seemed delighted with his powerful eloquence, drew him on from point to point, until his remarks formed another and most effective speech.' As an example of Mr. Bright's energy, we may mention that on the day following his ardous labours at Durham he addressed an immense assemblage at Drury Lane Theatre, London, upon the question of the Corn Laws.

Lord Dungannon's triumph at Durham was very short-lived. Being petitioned against, he was unseated on the ground of bribery by his agents, and a new election took place in July. Mr. Bright at once again took the field, and was opposed on Tory principles by a Mr. Purvis, a barrister. If the learned gentleman made as poor a figure forensically as he did politically, his clients were greatly to be pitied. From a faithful report of his oration before his friends, we cull these few choice flowers of rhetoric: 'I have been received in Durham with the strongest enthusiasm. I have nailed my colours to the mast;

and come what blue there may,' (blue was the Liberal colour,) 'here I am, and I will support the cause to the last. I have been received enthusiastically. They have all voted for me. (A voice: "The poll has not come yet.") The promises I have received make my election certain; and I have got the women with me, every one. I have seen their smiles; I have seen their eyes; and I know from their very looks they have told me they are all for me. And how can a cause supported by the beauty of Durham fail? We cannot fail.' Mr. Purvis was both premature and indiscreet in claiming the support of all the ladies of Durham; and his remarks on this score led to a great deal of pleasantry at his expense. Caricatures appeared, showing Mr. Purvis at every point of his negotiations with the ladies, as described in his speech, viz., witnessing their smiles, looking into their eyes, etc. It is easy to imagine what kind of opponent this would be in the hands of Mr. Bright. The Tories themselves scarcely knew what to make of him, and were ashamed of his ridiculous appearance.

Mr. Bright, in addressing his friends, said it would not be necessary for him to refer at length to the circumstances which had necessitated a new election—a statement which was received with laughter, as the electors remembered the fate of Lord Dungannon. The electoral franchise was worth nothing whatever, unless freely given; and he asked the electors, according to their honest convictions, to give their suffrages in his favour. Examining the address of his opponent, and referring to the doctrines of the party with whom he was associated, Mr. Bright said: 'If I were an elector of this borough, I would say, "I am as independent a man as any lord in the land. My vote is my own, for the good of my country. I am not bound to follow in the wake of this lord, or of that party. I must use my own powers of reflection. I must find out what it were best for me to do. And as I must answer at the bar of public opinion—and answer, hereafter, at a tribunal where there can be no deception—I am bound to vote according to my conscience for that man who I believe will best promote the interests of the country of which I am a citizen." He could bring hundreds and thousands of working men, their wives and families, who would go down upon their knees, and ask them to vote for the man who would support the repeal of those laws which were destroying your trade and their trade—your prosperity and their prosperity.' Mr. Bright went on to avow himself the political friend of the working classes, and of the freemen of the borough, and he had not a sympathy in common with any lord in

the neighbourhood. He had a deep, settled, and unchanging sympathy with those whose only property was their labour, and whose only income was their wages. 'Rich and great people,' continued the candidate, 'can take care of themselves; but the poor and defenceless—the men with small cottages and large families—the men who must work six days every week, if they are to live in anything like comfort for a week,—these men want defenders; they want men to maintain their position in Parliament; they want men who will protest against any infringement of their rights, and who will on all occasions stand by them as the guardians of the rights of that community of which you are the representatives. Now I ask you, electors, to consider these points. Do not consider them with reference to me,—consider them with reference to yourselves. Think of your wives, and of your children, for whom you labour; who live out of the produce of your industry. Think of them; think what they suffer from bad laws, and that they might be comfortable under good laws. And if you are of opinion that the principles which I have propounded to you are such as are likely to advance your interests, then I fearlessly, and without any immodesty, ask you, when the day of election shall come, to register your votes in my favour, as the representative of those principles.'

The next and concluding passage of Mr. Bright's speech possesses both a public and a special autobiographical interest. 'We are bound together by the same interests,' he observed. 'We are made happy or miserable by the same means. What brings comfort to your homes, must bring plenty and comfort to mine. What gives security to your interests, and your enjoyments, must equally give security to mine. I am a working man as much as you. My father was as poor as any man in this crowd. He was of your own body, entirely. He boasts not—nor do I—of birth, nor of great family distinctions. What he has made, he has made by his own industry and successful commerce. What I have, comes from him, and from my own exertions. I have no interest in the extravagance of government; I have no interest in seeking appointments under any government; I have no interest in pandering to the views of any government; I have nothing to gain by being the tool of any party. I come before you as the friend of my own class and order; as one of the people; as one who would on all occasions, be the firm defender of your rights, and the asserter of all those privileges to which you are justly entitled. It is on these grounds that I offer myself to your notice; it is on these

grounds that I solicit your suffrages;—it is for this alone, the assertion of my principles, and the maintenance of my opinions, that I am prepared to sacrifice the comforts of my present mode of life—to give up a home which is dear to me—to leave a family which is dear to me—and to part with comforts which cannot be enjoyed by any man who takes a prominent part in public affairs. It is for the maintenance of those principles that I am here in your city. I will buy no votes. I don't wish them, unless they are given freely. I am persuaded that the majority of those who hear me rejoice that corruption is at an end in the city of Durham. It would be an insult to nineteen out of every twenty of the men in this assemblage if I were to say or to think otherwise. I know perfectly well that you have honest wishes, and would like to be independent. I am sure that a vast proportion of you are in favour of honesty and independence in the exercise of the elective franchise. There have been men to whom I have been pointed out as their enemy, because I am here in consequence of the overthrow of a system which faction had created. But I do not come here to ask for the vote of any man who I believe for a moment could think that a paltry, absurd, ridiculous, bad custom should be put into the balance against the rights, and the interests, and the prosperity of this great community. On these grounds, then, I come before you. I intend to canvass, if possible, every elector; and I trust that when the poll is declared from yonder window, or wherever the Mayor may determine, the opinions of the electors of Durham will be declared to be in favour of justice, and mercy, and truth, as applied to legislation in this country; instead of that cruel, and unjust, and merciless system of monopoly and extravagance under which we have so long laboured.'

There is no speech by Mr. Bright in his early electioneering campaigns which more clearly, if indeed so clearly, sets forth his relations to the great working-class constituency as this particular Durham speech. In that address he distinctly promulgates the grounds upon which he had at all a right to challenge public sympathy. While justly warm, perhaps, as one of his temperament must necessarily be, over the peculiar forms of oppression current, he was never that offensive partisan which has too frequently been represented. It may be maintained by some that the model politician is he who considers the claims of both parties from a far distance; but in periods of crisis it is not the careful weighing of political axioms, but action, that is requisite. The country had arrived at such a crisis when Mr. Bright was contesting Durham in 1843, and it

behoved him to speak out, and to speak boldly and uncompromisingly. This he unquestionably did; and there is no political address by the right hon. gentleman which demands more careful perusal than the one from which we have quoted. It had less of appeal to feelings than to principles; and yet the closing passage above extracted, while convincing from the argumentative point of view, is still more conclusive and admirable from that nobly-apologetic side which has since been illustrated by such distinguished examples as those of Cardinal Newman and Mr. Gladstone.

For two days Mr. Bright was now actively engaged in canvassing, but on the evening of the second day he delivered another stirring address to the electors. 'I am one,' he said, 'who has been taught to believe—and the longer I live, the more convinced I am that that belief has a just foundation—that there is no bad law which can be passed by Government whose influence is not felt even in the smallest cottage in the most remote part of the country. It is said sometimes—or some poet has said—I forget the exact quotation, but the meaning of it is—

> "How small a part of ills which men endure
> Are those which kings or laws can make or cure."

Now I believe there are laws in this country, some of which have wrought much evil; and that by a removal of those evil laws, and the substitution of good ones, great evil might be done away with, and great good produced.' The speaker then referred to the suffering in Durham, and the lack of employment, remarking that the interests of the electors had heretofore been sacrificed at the shrine of party. Now he (Mr. Bright) came before them entirely unconnected with either or with any party in the State. He would support no ministry as a ministry. They could have no interest in Sir Robert Peel remaining in power, unless he did something to bring about a better state of things in the country, and ensure just and impartial government. He was no enemy of Sir Robert Peel; he only spoke of him in his capacity of Prime Minister. With regard to the coal duty, the candidate observed that it was nothing but direct plunder of certain property in Northumberland and Durham; and it was put on for the purpose of staving off for a time the abolition of the Corn Laws, and of the sugar and coffee monopolies. 'I think when men are obliged to immure themselves deep in mines, until they almost forget that a sun was made, that they of all men have a right to demand of

any government that no tax should be placed upon what they bring up from the mine, in order that the demand for that commodity may not be diminished—that their wages may not fall—and that their families may not derive less of the comforts they are entitled to from those hard and dangerous labours in which they are engaged.'

From this passage of his speech, which was warmly appreciated, Mr. Bright went on to reply to certain objections which had been raised against Free Trade. One of his points was received with loud laughter and cheering. 'I have heard of a waiter,' he remarked, 'who was so exceedingly clever, that it was said he could pack a quart of wine into a pint bottle; but I never heard of any one who was clever enough to get a quart of wine out of a pint bottle. And don't you know that in the case of a deficient harvest, the landowner, being the strongest, will get his share as long as he can; that the farmer, being the next strongest, will get his share of what the farm produces as long as he can; that the labourer, being the weakest, must come in for the greatest share of the scarcity which is caused by the deficient harvest?' Mr. Bright then quoted passages from a speech made by a Mr. Munday, a large farmer near Andover, to prove that it was worse than a folly, it was a crime, to assert that the labourers on a farm were benefited in any way by high prices and scarcity. Every man who refused to vote for the abolition of such a system as this, which by law made famine—which doomed hundreds and thousands of honest men and their families to the utmost destitution which could possibly be imagined—was not a freeman; nor did he wish to make others free. The speaker next dwelt upon the necessity for the ballot, for he had himself discovered that a wide system of intimidation prevailed. Two candidates had recently stood for Nottingham on the principle of purity of election—Joseph Sturge and Mr. Gisborne—and the latter had now been returned. Why could not the men of Durham act in the same way? Towards the conclusion of his address, Mr. Bright made the following appeal, which greatly moved the attentive crowd of listeners:—

'I have found, as I said before, suffering among you, and believe it arises from bad laws; and I believe that that suffering may be removed. I have seen in your houses a great number of little children; and some of them reminded me of one I have at home; and I am sure that my child is no dearer to me than your children are to you. I have seen some that looked as if born in poverty. I saw one cradle to-day, with a little child in it, that almost brought the tears to my eyes to see the little clothing it had about it. It was well it was summer, or it must have suffered greatly from the cold. Well, now, if

a man have three or four children, he has just three or four times as much interest in having the Corn Laws abolished as the man who has none. Your children will grow up to be men and women. It may be that your heads will be laid in the grave before they come to manhood or womanhood; but they will grow up, and want employment at honest trades—want houses and furniture, food and clothing, and all the necessaries and comforts of life. They will be honest and industrious as yourselves. But the difficulties which surround you will be increased tenfold by the time they have arrived at your age. Trade will then have become still more crippled; the supply of food still more diminished; the taxation of the country still further increased. The great lords, and some other people, will have become still more powerful, unless the freemen and electors of Durham and of other places stand to their guns, and resolve that, whatever may come of Queen, or Lords, or Commons, or Church, or anybody,—great and powerful, and noble though they be,—the working classes will stand by the working classes; and having the honesty to live by the work of their own hands, will stand up for the rights of honest industry; and will no longer lay themselves down in the dust to be trampled upon by the iron heel of monopoly, and have their very lives squeezed out of them by evils such as I have described.'

At a later meeting, Mr. Bright stated that a deputation from the ironworkers of Staffordshire (who were in no better position than the coalworkers) had had an interview with Sir Robert Peel, to lay before him the distressed condition of the trade, and the appalling state of destitution into which the people were being plunged. Sir Robert said he could do nothing for them; he would take the subject into consideration; he sympathized marvellously with them; but he had no remedy for their distresses. All this misery arose from causes which he (Mr. Bright) had often pointed out. The evil was due to bad government. 'You have in this country all that should make you the most prosperous and contented people under heaven. Providence has blessed you abundantly. Your prayers for daily bread—your prayers for every blessing upon your country—have been answered long ago from heaven. But there is another power which arrests the bounty of heaven, and dooms the children of our common Father, by hundreds of thousands, to intolerable suffering, when he has designed for them every great and continued happiness and enjoyment.'

The nomination took place on the 24th of July. Mr. Bright and his supporters first appeared at the hustings; and the cheers with which they were greeted lasted for some minutes. His opponent, Mr. Purvis, whose chief distinction seems to have been that he brought amusement into the contest, exhibited singular nervousness in mounting the steps to the hustings, and his reception when there was such as would have discouraged a much bolder man. The Tory candidate, however, to his credit be it said, went through his uncomfortable experiences very good-humoredly. Mr. Bright himself was in excellent form all

through the proceedings—enjoying the fun which was then inseparable from a nomination day at an English election, and even contributing to it himself.

Mr. John Henderson proposed, and Mr. William Shields seconded, the nomination of Mr. Bright; and Mr. J. W. Hays proposed, and Mr. John Foster seconded, that of Mr. Thomas Purvis, who for some inscrutable reason appears to have been always called 'Billy'—a name which invariably evoked roars of laughter. Mr. Bright first addressed the assembly, and began by calling upon the electors to decide whether they would support the rights and interests of the people in general, or give their power and influence to a class which had already far too much power and influence in the country. He then proceeded to overhaul the opinions of his opponent, respecting which great difficulty of accurate knowledge existed. When asked, during the delivery of his addresses, what those opinions were, he referred the electors to his handbills; and on turning to the handbills, he (Mr. Bright) found that Mr. Purvis merely engaged to support those Conservative principles which had placed the present Administration in power. In fact, he might say in the words of the poet,

'All that we know is, nothing can be known.'

Mr. Bright then went on to show what the principles of the Ministry were, and how their present policy left the working classes in a condition of great suffering. He also referred to the condition of Ireland, and to the great bill of the session, the Irish Arms Bill. If there are still some who could for a moment doubt Mr. Bright's deep friendliness and sympathy for the Irish people, let them turn back to these words in his Durham speech, anticipatory of his later utterances:—

'What is the condition of Ireland? Two millions of her children are paupers; and yet it is a magnificent island, with a soil more fertile than the country in which we live—with a soil capable of producing anything, and blessed, almost above every other country, with abundance by Providence; and with a people (though I need not tell you what they are) generous, warm-hearted, intelligent, honest, and virtuous and probably, at this moment, more sober than the people of any other country in the world. What do the Irish people complain of? Of no employment, because the Conservative policy of England has destroyed the manufactures of Ireland. They complain of the Established Church in Ireland as a grievance; and so it must be admitted to be, when only one in ten of the population belong to the Church. It is just as unfair to have a Protestant establishment sweeping up the ecclesiastical revenues there, as it would be for a Romish establishment in England to sweep up all the ecclesiastical revenues of this island. The people of Ireland also believe that in the administration of the law they have not impartial justice done to them. They complain, moreover, that they are badly used by their

landlords, and that they are turned out of their cottages. We have seen it stated lately, by an Irishman who is my representative in the House of Commons, that not less than seventy thousand persons have been turned out in one year in Ireland, from the cottages which they had lived in from their birth; that landlords, to consolidate their farms, and drive away the miserable people, had ejected them from their cottages—forced them out, with their wives and children, on to the highways and to the streets, having taken down their cottages—yea, driven a ploughshare over the homesteads of these unfortunate people; and when those people cry aloud to Government for redress, that Government has nothing to offer them but an Arms Bill.'

Yet all this policy, continued the speaker, his opponent would support. He for his part asked the electors to stand forward and become standard-bearers in that great army of justice and right which was already marching forward to the deliverance of the country. Mr. Bright repeated his previous declaration that he was no party man, and that he came not at the call of any ministry. He had buried all his other politics for a time, and asked for their suffrages on the ground that he was a Free Trader alone. Some men found a seat in Parliament a stepping-stone to other offices more lucrative; but all the office he sought was to be a representative of the people. 'Justice and impartiality to all' was his motto; and so long as he had memory and voice to express an opinion, so long would he clamour against the oppression which existed, and in favour of the rights of the great body of the people. Then followed this amusing—and yet not altogether amusing—passage:

'If I understand Mr. Purvis's opinions—and I confess that from the fog, the mist, and the gloom with which he has contrived to enshroud them, I find great difficulty in discovering what they are (*laughter*)—I suspect strongly that if by a majority of votes he be declared member for Durham, he will immediately enrol himself as a member of that Pro-Corn-Law Club which sits in St. Stephen's; and whose main business it is to raise the price of your food, and to lower the rate of your wages. (*Cheers.*) The Corn Law is a famine law. Why do the landlords say it will do them harm if it be repealed? Because it would lower the price of food. It would lower the price by bringing more food into the market. If that be true, it must be quite true that it raises the price of corn by keeping it out of the market. And if the law keep corn out of the market, then it must make food more scarce than it would be if such a law did not exist. And this making of food scarce, is what I call making a famine by law. (*Hear, hear, and cheers.*) Now I ask you, as I did the last time I was here—I ask you, working-men and freemen of Durham, who gets all the scarcity, when there is a scarcity of food? ("The poor man," promptly answered a voice from the crowd.) My honourable opponent and myself bear no signs of having suffered from *scarcity*. (*Laughter*—both the gentlemen having a tendency to *plumpness*.) I dare say we have hardly ever known, for this many a year, the luxury of feeling right hungry. (*Laughter*.) Many a man in both Houses of Parliament may suffer from eating too much; but I will be bound that none of them feel the consequences of eating too little. (*Great laughter and cheers.*)'

In the case of scarcity and famine, it was the working man,

not Mr. Purvis or himself, who would need to go to oatmeal or potatoes. If the existing laws were not repealed, there would be still less trade and lower wages; more suffering, more pauperism, more union workhouses, and more of all life's afflictions which all men had a natural desire to shun.

'There was once a law passed through Parliament for the protection of dogs from being stolen. (*Laughter.*) There were some very heavy penalties attached to it, one of which was this, that any person guilty of offending against the Act should be punished by having inflicted upon him fifty or a hundred lashes; one-half to go to the informer, and the other half to the poor of the parish! (*Peals of laughter.*) Well, now, the Corn Law is one of this kind of things. It gives all the afflictions which it creates and encourages "to the poor of the parish." (*Hear, hear.*) I ask you to do what you can to abolish that law. (*Cheers.*)'

By-and-by the farmers would declare that they would no longer be defrauded; for they must see that their best customers were the manufacturing and trading population; and that when, from want of work, and consequent want of wages, that population could not buy their agricultural produce, their own ruin—as high rentals continued—stared them in the face. Mr. Bright then stated that his own principles were, briefly,—freedom of trade, justice to all classes of the people, impartiality in the administration of the laws, a Government to protect and not to oppress, and all those principles which were truly and really conservative of all that is worthy of conservation beneath the dominion of the British Crown. Then, in the course of an impassioned peroration, occurred this passage:—

'I have seen the freemen of your city looking disconsolate and sad. Their hands were ready to labour, their skill was ready to produce all that their trade demanded.—They were as honest and as industrious as any men in this assemblage; but no man hired them. They were in a state of involuntary idleness, and were driving fast to the point of pauperism. I have seen their wives, too, with three or four children about them,—one in the cradle, one at the breast. I have seen their countenances. I have seen the signs of their sufferings. I have seen the emblems and the symbols of affection, such as I did not expect to see in this city. Aye! and I have seen those little children who, at a not distant day, will be the men and women of the city of Durham —I have seen their poor little wan faces and anxious looks, as if the furrows of old age were coming upon them before they had escaped from the age of childhood. I have seen all this in your city; and I have seen far more than this in the neighbourhood from which I come. You have seen, in all probability, people from my neighbourhood walking your streets and begging for that bread which the Corn Law would not allow them to earn.

"Bread-taxed weaver! let us see
What hath bread-tax done for thee,
And thy children, vilely led,
Singing hymns for shameful bread,
Till the stones of every street
Know their little naked feet."

This is what the Corn Law does for the weavers of my neighbourhood; and for the weaver and the artisan of yours. Yes, men of Durham! yes, freemen and electors! I implore you—on my bended knees I would ask you, for your sakes, not mine—for, personally, it is not to me the value of this piece of paper which way the election ends; upon principle, I ask you to claim for yourselves and for your families the right to have that cheap and wholesome food which a merciful and wise God has supplied for both poor and rich, and upon which they might have been happy and comfortable if His wise laws had not been infringed by human power; I ask you now, before it be too late—now that you have an opportunity—now, when your countrymen, from the furthest ends of the empire, are turning anxious looks to the accounts received from this ancient and renowned city;—I ask you on behalf of yourselves and your homes—on behalf of millions of suffering families—on behalf of the principles of justice and humanity—I ask you, I implore you, to cast away all party feeling—to come forward to the poll to-morrow, to register your votes in a cause on which, I believe, hangs the salvation of our common country; and by which, if you are but true to it and to yourselves, you will strike a blow which may be followed up by many other counties, and cities, and boroughs of the kingdom; and the cloud which at this moment overhangs our social horizon be swept away for ever. And as, at this moment, those clouds which soar above us temporarily obscure the rays of the glorious sun, so the clouds which now overhang this unhappy country shall be dispelled, and the radiant beams of that glorious orb of commercial freedom which gives life, and health, and joy to all, shall shine again upon the people of this country, and England shall once more be great, and happy, and free.'

Mr. Bright's oratory has perhaps gathered in depth and intensity since he gave utterance, when thirty-two years of age only, to this speech; but he has probably never surpassed it for the exhibition of all those qualities which make an election address truly powerful—viz., pathos, humour, eloquence, and that general adaptability of the whole to the audience, as regards its arguments and appeals, which never fails of success. A tolerable proficient in the art of platform speaking would have found it somewhat difficult to follow him upon this occasion; but Mr. Purvis laboured under unusual difficulties. If he could have answered Mr. Bright's arguments, well and good; but if not, it would have been much better to have delivered a speech on the old lines, and have done with it. Mr. Purvis chose the former course, much to his own discomfiture. The running fire of derisive laughter with which his answer to Mr. Bright was received demonstrated its value. This is the kind of platform nonsense that prevailed through Mr. Purvis's speech: 'No doubt my hon. opponent has seen all the distress that he relates. No doubt that he has seen all the two millions of paupers he talks of, including the "wasted babies" of Durham. Now, I have canvassed Durham—not so much as him—but I have canvassed it; I have been in the midst of the healthy and handsome people of Durham—(roars of laughter)—and I know nothing of those wasted babies and poor, pale-

faced women whom my hon. opponent speaks of.' (Laughter, and a remark, 'Thou's blind, Billy.') A statement that Mr. Bright had said nothing of his principles was received with shouts of laughter, as also was another statement that he (Mr. Purvis) was thoroughly independent.

When the show of hands was taken, all the assembly, with the exception of some twenty or thirty people, was in favour of Mr. Bright. A poll was of course demanded, and it took place on the following day. The Tories put forth all their efforts, but Mr. Bright was returned by a majority of seventy-eight, the numbers being, Bright, 488; Purvis, 410. The successful candidate's reception at the Town Hall was most enthusiastic. Durham market-place was crowded beyond all precedent, and when Mr. Bright appeared outside on the hustings, the cheering and waving of hats were continued for several minutes, and seemed almost irrepressible. The new member returned thanks, affirming that that day's poll would do more to strike a telling blow at the protection, or rather the plunder of trade system under which the country had been labouring —a stronger and a deadlier blow than any election which had hitherto taken place. He concluded by quoting these spirited lines of Shelley—a poet whose appreciative readers were at that time very few:—

> Men of England, heirs of glory,
> Heroes of unwritten story,
> Nurslings of one mighty mother,
> Hopes of her and one another!
> 'Rise, like lions after slumber,
> In unvanquishable number,
> Shake your chains to earth like dew,
> Which in sleep had fallen on you:
> Ye are many—they are few.'

Although Mr. Bright came forward on such pronounced principles, we find that amongst those who voted for him were Mr. Granger, the second member for the city, the Dean of Durham, and Mr. Prebendary Ogle. After the declaration of the poll, the hon. member went in procession in an open carriage round the market-place, up the Bailey, through the College, and afterwards through the principal streets of the town, attended by an immense concourse of people, cheering enthusiastically at every step. He alighted at the Waterloo Hotel, where he received an ovation from probably the largest meeting ever assembled in Durham. He briefly addressed the vast crowd, congratulating them that the cloud which had hung over the city had been removed. He begged them in their

politics to act upon the golden rule that whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

The election caused considerable excitement throughout the country, and it elevated greatly the hopes and the courage of the Anti-Corn Law League party. Addresses and resolutions of thanks poured in upon the electors of Durham from all parts of the country. In Mr. Bright's native town of Rochdale the rejoicing was naturally great, but the most important demonstration in connection with the election was held in London, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand. It was called 'for the purpose of congratulating the electors of the city of Durham on the recent victory they had so nobly achieved for the cause of Free Trade by returning John Bright, Esq., as their representative to Parliament.' Although the meeting had not been publicly announced for more than twenty-four hours, no less than from six to seven thousand persons entered the Crown and Anchor in the hope of being present, more than two-thirds of whom were compelled to retire as they came, under the dispiriting news that the place was crowded. The Hon. C. P. Villiers, M.P., took the chair, and in his opening speech said that the election had rendered a double service to the country. It had struck a blow at two great causes of the evil in this country, the abuse of property and the abuse of power. At the mention of Mr. Bright's name, the whole audience rose to their feet, cheering loudly and waving their hats. Dr. (afterwards Sir John) Bowring, parodying a well-known epigram upon Dr. Goodenough, who was once called upon to preach before the House of Commons, said—and the lines were received with tumultuous applause—

> 'Tis meet enough and fit enough the House should be enlightened,
> For sure enough they're dull enough, and wanting to be *Brightened!*'

Mr. Bright made an earnest speech on the great question of the day, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and in the course of it expressed his disappointment over his first experience of the House of Commons on the previous evening. Lord John Russell opened a debate with a solemn warning to the Government; and then Sir Robert Peel got up. He looked as though he was going to attack Lord John Russell in a very effectual manner, for he seemed terribly indignant; but it was all smoke. 'He certainly did what man could do to defend the present Government, but it would have exceeded the powers of an angel to explain to the House, or to the country, how it was that with a majority in the House of Commons of more than a hundred,

with nearly all the House of Lords at its back, with a starving people before them, with decaying trade, with insurrection threatening them, more or less near, in Ireland, in Wales, in the north of England, with disease eating into the very heart's core of the empire,—that, under all these circumstances, this long session should well-nigh have passed over, and the Government not be able to point to one single measure which could in the slightest degree ameliorate the condition of the people.'

The Parliamentary band of Free Traders—which, though small in numbers, was rapidly increasing in influence with the country—thus received a strong and valuable accession. None of those present in the House of Commons on the 28th of July, 1843, and who saw the young representative for Durham appear at the table, and make the declaration prescribed by the Act for members of the Society of Friends could for a moment imagine that the new member—canvassed though his advent had been—was destined to develope into an orator whose eloquence pales not before that of a Sheil, a Grattan, or a Canning, or before that of his own more immediate contemporary Gladstone.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT—FACTORY LEGISLATION, ETC.

The League triumph at Durham.—Mr. Bright's appearance in the House.—His maiden Speech.—Import Duties.—An Appeal to Ministers.—The Corn Laws the real grievance of the People.—The Chelsea Out-pensioners Bill.—Commercial relations with the Brazils.—Factory Legislation.—Lord Ashley and Mr. Bright.—Defence of the Operatives.—A dramatic incident.—Distress in the Eastern Counties.—The evils of Protection.—Mr. Bright on the Game Laws.—Speech on the Maynooth Grant.

With every disposition to minimise the triumph which the League principles had achieved in Durham, those journals which were strongly opposed to Mr. Bright and his friends found the task impossible. Here was a candidate totally unknown in the city three months before he wrested it out of the hands of the monopolists. True, the *Morning Herald* had given utterance to a feeling of uneasiness shortly before the election when it remarked that 'the Quaker Bright had many friends in Durham.' But it seemed scarcely likely, nay, highly improbable, in the eyes of most people, that a young candidate, appearing in Durham for only the second time in his life, and contesting the representation on two such principles as purity of election and the abrogation of the Corn Laws, could win a seat hitherto regarded as the appanage of an aristocratic family, and one which was supposed to be open only to the pressure of the golden lever. Three or four days preceding the election even, the correspondent of the *Times* wrote from Durham to the effect that the seat might be regarded as safe for Mr. Purvis. He had very good grounds for believing that he would be returned by a substantial majority. The result defeated this and many other prognostications. Commenting on the moral of the victory, a contemporary writer observed, 'Greater than the accession to the House of Commons of an additional advocate of freedom of trade, freedom of conscience, freedom of representation, and universal peace—able, vigorous, and eloquent though he be—must be the results of John Bright's election. It has proved that a principle is much more than a name. He has achieved a victory which could not have been attained by any one even of the very *elite* of the Whig aristocracy. Lord

John Russell, Lord Morpeth, Lord Howick, would have failed where the Rochdale cotton-spinner was successful. At the same time, though the cause was good, if the advocate had been bad, the result might still have been different. The candidate must not be robbed of his share of the triumph; the electors of Durham were quite unable to resist Mr. Bright's convincing and persuasive eloquence.

But, the seat being gained, interest now centred in the new member's appearance in the House. Whatever be the cause, we suppose that no member, even the most fluent, ever yet rose for the first time in the House of Commons without confessing to a feeling of trepidation. He is conscious that he is addressing, not only one of the highest, but one of the most critical assemblies in the world. Eloquence at the bar and upon the platform is not the same thing as eloquence in the House of Commons. So, although Mr. Bright had addressed very large audiences out of doors, it was not without diffidence that he rose to make his maiden speech in Parliament, before the smallest audience he had probably ever addressed. This was on the 7th of August, during a discussion in a very thin House of Mr. Ewart's motion 'That it is expedient that the principles and suggestions contained in the evidence taken before the Import Duties Commission of session 1840 be carried into general effect; and that the trade and industry of the country require further and more effectual relief by the removal or reduction of duties which press upon the raw material of manufacture, and on articles of interchange with foreign nations, as well as on the means of subsistence of the people.'

Mr. Bright began by expressing his reluctance to take up the time of the House, especially so soon after he had taken his seat there, but the strong interest he felt in the question, and the duty he owed to his constituents, called upon him for the expression of his opinion. He then went on to complain that on both sides of the House there had been too much reliance upon the miserable system of protection. He avowed his own opinions, pleading for the total abolition of the Corn Law, and the adoption of the principle of perfect freedom of trade. 'Crime,' he said, 'has often veiled itself under the name of virtue, but of all the crimes against the laws of God and the true interests of man, none has ever existed more odious and more destructive than that which has assumed the amiable term of Protection.' Then he proceeded:

'The right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government (Sir R. Peel) has acknowledged the soundness of the policy of buying in the cheapest and selling

in the dearest market. The Secretary for the Home Department (Sir James Graham) says our principles are the principles of common sense; the President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Gladstone) has written and spoken Free-trade doctrines; the opinions of the noble Lord the member for North Lancashire, and Secretary for the Colonies (Lord Stanley), I should not value highly when I remember the profound ignorance on this question he manifested when last before his constituents; but of all the members of the Government, the one for whom I feel an especial affection, is the right hon. the Paymaster of the Forces (Sir E. Knatchbull). Unlike his colleague at the head of the Government, his words seem to have been given him for the purpose of expressing his ideas, and he has advanced the only tangible argument that has been uttered in this House in favour of the protection system. The house cannot, I am sure, have forgotten the argument of the right hon. baronet, that the Corn Law is necessary to enable the landowners to discharge or maintain the settlements made on the marriages of their daughters. I have, since this declaration was made, attended many large meetings of agriculturists, and I confess I have never found a single farmer who seemed to be aware that this House had ever bestowed any attention on the means of providing portions for farmers' daughters. And no labourer has ever asserted that Parliament has taken steps to enable him to give a sum of ten or twenty pounds to his daughters to provide furniture for their cottages on entering the marriage state. I protest against the injustice of a law that enriches the rich and cares nothing for the poor; and if, during the period I may have a seat in this House, I should ever directly or indirectly give any support to a system so manifestly contrary to sound policy, and so destructive of the welfare of the great body of the people, I should be ashamed to hold up my head in any assembly of my countrymen.'

It may be assumed that by this time Mr. Bright had quite lost his nervousness. Having bearded the Treasury Bench all round, he went on to remark that this question was simply one of rent; and was rent a property more sacred than any other? To him the property in labour was a more sacred property than any right to the soil could ever be. Why was it that the past four years had been years of suffering? Because the protection given to one description of property prevented the application of another description of property to the relief of the wants of the country. Seeing the extreme discontent existing among the great body of the working classes, he put it to any gentleman enamoured of the Corn Law, What was it to which we were hastening? As regarded the Irish question, the great difficulty was how to give employment, and wages, and food to the two millions of paupers in Ireland. 'It is no petty legislation that can do this, no bringing in bills for the recovery of small debts, and making a boast of measures such as that. Landowners have been our law-makers, and yet everywhere there is suffering, and the landowners are everywhere charged with the mischief. You have been sowing curses, and you now wonder that curses have grown.'

Mr. Bright concluded his first speech with this personal appeal to Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gladstone:—

'I am surprised at the course pursued by the right hon. baronet. I should be glad to see him, not the Minister of the Queen merely, but the Minister of the people also. I should rejoice to see him disconnect himself from the party whose principles he declares to be unsound. I should be glad to see him bearing in mind the source from which he has sprung, the source of his power and wealth, as it is the source of much of the power, and wealth, and greatness of this empire. He may have a laudable ambition—he may seek renown, but no man can be truly great who is content to serve an oligarchy who regard no interest but their own, and whose legislation proves that they have no sympathy with the wants of the great body of their countrymen. I live in the manufacturing districts; I am well acquainted with the wishes and feelings of the population; and I do not hesitate to say, when I view the disregard with which they are treated by this House, that the dangers which impend are greater than those which now surround us. I can assure the right hon. the President of the Board of Trade, that his flimsy excuses will not avail him at the bar of public opinion. He knows what is right, and he refuses to do it; and whether the session be at the beginning or near its close, it is his duty to propose measures of relief to the commerce of the country. That this is not the time is an excuse which is as untrue as it is insulting. When will the time come? Will monopoly resign its hold of the subsistence of the people? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" The Government knows what is right, the people demand it to be done; and the Ministry who refuse to act incur an awful responsibility. I have been anxious thus briefly to express my opinions;—I grieve that the country should be thus trifled with, and that it should have grounds for despairing of relief from this House. Nothing but danger can come from persisting in our present policy.'

The motion for which Mr. Bright spoke was lost by 52 to 25. The hon. member's address excited a good deal of interest, and it was admitted to have many telling points. One who was in the House of Commons at the time observed that 'as a speaker Mr. Bright is far superior to many who are listened to in that assembly; but those who know the constitution of the House know also the great influence of station, name, and wealth, and how much dulness will be tolerated from one of a good family. Mr. Bright is about the middle size, rather firmly and squarely built, with a fair, clear complexion, and an intelligent and pleasing expression of countenance. His voice is good, his enunciation distinct, and his delivery free from any unpleasant peculiarity or mannerism. He is young, and has apparently a long career before him. His dress is rather more *recherché* than that of the Friends of a generation back, differing but slightly from the ordinary costume of the day.' Mr. Bright's earnestness and energy were proverbial, and it speedily became apparent that whatever might have been the case as regards the past, in the future the representation of Durham would be no dead-letter.

The Government, too, had acquired another sleepless critic —though that was an acquisition for which they were not anxious. A few days after the delivery of his maiden speech,

and just before the prorogation, Mr. Bright again addressed the House, and put in a stirring if indirect plea for the Anti-Corn Law cause. The hon. member supported a motion for the rejection of the Chelsea out-pensioners bill—a measure which rendered old veterans liable to be called on to serve again, or to lose the pensions which they had been awarded for long service. He began by combating the assertion of the War Secretary (Sir H. Hardinge) that a standing army was one of the greatest safe-guards of constitutional freedom, and said he trusted so monstrous a doctrine would never again be uttered. He read a letter showing that the bill before the House was not regarded favourably by the pensioners. The circumstances of the manufacturing districts were put forward as a reason for demanding the passing of this bill. But 'the question was, should they grant to the Government greater powers of repression whilst that Government refused all redress of the heavy grievances of the people.' Mr. Bright then detailed the sufferings which prevailed in the manufacturing districts, and added, 'The distress exists still; the laws which destroyed the trade of a rapidly increasing population exist still; and what do the Government now propose? To do tardy justice? To remove the restrictions? To let the people work who want to work, and who would have work if the law did not prevent it? Nothing of the kind. There is no sign of repentance on the part of the Ministers: justice and relief are asked for, and the people are answered by a bill to raise a new body of military to keep the discontent of the suffering and the oppressed from becoming dangerous to hon. members opposite.' The people had assembled together, but they had assembled peaceably. After referring also to our treatment of Ireland, the hon. member in this forcible passage indicated the lessons of the past;—

'The people of the United Kingdom asked for a reform of this House—for a better representation of the people; and their prayer was for a long period despised and neglected. They asked that stumps of trees and old walls should no longer send members to this House, but that the thousands who inhabit Manchester, and Leeds, and Birmingham should have a voice in your deliberations. You refused it. It was a just demand, but there was no clamour. It was needful for the good of the people, but it was not then needful to secure you from violence. You dared to refuse it. But the usual results followed; a storm arose before which you quailed, and you were for a time swept almost from before the sight of the public. Now we have grievances; we have a law which prevents our trade—which denies the right to labour, for themselves and their families, to multitudes of honest and industrious individuals. The people ask you for nothing that is yours, but for that which is their own, and which you have taken from them for a time. The population increases, and trade does not increase with it, and therefore suffering and competition

increase. . . . If monopoly be right and wise, let us have it, fully and without stint; but if Free Trade be the policy for this country, then let us have Free Trade. The question for this House to determine appears to me to be a very simple one indeed. Shall we give the people the means to live comfortably by their honest labour, or shall we afford to the Government which refuses them justice, the power to coerce them, and to render it safe to be unjust? Is this policy to go on for ever?'

Warning the Government that the middle classes would not for ever go on supporting the aristocracy against the rights of the most numerous class, Mr. Bright said that for himself he would be no party to giving increased power to a Government which gave no evidence of a disposition to redress the wrongs they had admitted; but he would cordially support any proposition which might serve to prevent the passing of that most unnecessary and coercive bill. The Government, however, had a large majority on the measure.

Early in the session of 1844, attention was directed to the condition of our commercial relations with the Brazils, and Mr. Labouchere moved an address to Her Majesty, praying her to adopt such measures as might prove best calculated to maintain and improve those relations. Mr. Gladstone opposed the motion, on the ground of its embarrassing nature, while he admitted the great importance of our trade with the Brazils. Mr. Bright spoke upon the motion, and declared that he could only express disgust and amazement at the manner in which noble lords and hon. gentlemen spoke of the Africans in the Brazils, while entirely overlooking the famishing population in their own manufacturing counties and agricultural districts. They had already almost an open market with the Brazils, and yet our trade with that country for many years past had been diminishing. The benefit of the existing treaty had been destroyed by sacrificing the national good to class and selfish interests. As regarded the sugar supply, the West India planters derived the same advantage from that monopoly which the landed proprietors of England sought from the Corn Laws. The Government knew that this was merely a question of self-interest, and the country knew it too. But they might depend upon it there was intelligence and virtue enough in the country to put an end, not only to this, but to every other monopoly by which the people were suffering. Mr. Gladstone had evaded the real question at issue. The monopolists, whether Whigs or Tories, all hung together. They were then discussing the question of sugar, but it was the same interest, whether corn, sugar, or timber. Referring to the prevalent distress, Mr. Bright said that no state of agricultural prosperity ever yet

maintained the revenue of the kingdom; and unless the Government regarded those districts with a more favourable feeling, he could tell them that consequences would some day come, for which they would have received but a small compensation from the Corn Law or the Sugar Law. With upwards of two millions of paupers in Ireland—with a million paupers in England and Wales—and with an enormous mass of poverty in Scotland, it was astonishing that a Government which professed to feel for the sufferings of the people would aggravate, instead of seeking to alleviate, those sufferings, by still further depressing that trade which could alone afford them employment.

Lord Palmerston followed on the same side, affirming that the line of argument which Government used to justify them in refusing to let in foreign sugar, was no more than declaring that this monopoly should be everlasting. If they were to wait until they could induce the Brazilians to abolish slavery and the slave trade, no person in that House would live to see the day when foreign sugar would be admitted into the home markets of this country. There voted for Mr. Labouchere's motion, 132; against, 205; so that the Government had a majority of 73.

We shall pass over at present Mr. Bright's early speeches in the House connected directly with the Corn Laws, reserving them for another chapter, and deal here only with miscellaneous questions. Of these latter questions, one of the most important related to the hours of factory labour—a subject discussed at length and with much warmth in the session of 1844. It gave rise to considerable misunderstanding between Mr. Bright and Lord Ashley—now the Earl of Shaftesbury, a nobleman imbued with true feelings of philanthropy, though these feelings may not always have been under the control of the highest wisdom. The working classes have been largely indebted both to Mr. Bright and Lord Shaftesbury, and the difference of opinion which arose between them, culminating in more than one passage of arms, was naturally therefore viewed with regret. We turn to these debates now for the purpose of showing Mr. Bright's true position in regard to factory legislation, and of disentangling it from that which is frequently assigned to him. It is also due to him to state, as between himself and Lord Ashley, that the latter was very largely dependent upon hearsay for many of his facts, and could not possibly be so intimately acquainted with the subject as those who had spent all their lives amongst the factory operatives, and were perfectly conversant with everything concerning them and their work.

So much by way of preliminary. Sir James Graham having brought forward in the House of Commons the Government Bill for the regulation of labour in Factories, Lord Ashley proposed, in committee, the following amendment to Clause 2. 'That the word "night" shall be taken to mean from six o'clock in the evening to six o'clock in the following morning; and the word "mealtime" shall be taken to mean an interval of cessation from work for the purpose of rest and refreshment, at the rate of two hours a day, with a view to effect a limitation of the hours of labour to ten in the day.' The noble mover dwelt upon the physical and moral evils attending the factory system, and asked 'in behalf of the poor, a time to live and a time to die,—a time for the duties of life, and a time for its comforts.'

Mr. Bright rose during the debate and delivered a lengthy and important speech. He complained in the outset that Lord Ashley had taken a most unfair and most unjust view of the question, and one which the reports of the factory inspectors did not corroborate. This the hon. member illustrated by extracts referring to the comparatively healthy condition of the workers in factories. It was also proved in evidence of the Factory Commission that the height of boys and girls employed in agriculture, while exceeding that of those employed in mines, showed no sensible difference from that of those employed in mills. There was hardly a complaint made by Lord Ashley against the manufacturing towns of the North which might not be equally well alleged against London or Birmingham. He cited cases to prove that the labour of the London milliners and dressmakers, during the season, was much worse than the severest toil in any of the factories. Besides prolonged hours, there was also such a thing as starving to death. Let not the House suppose that if they passed the clause before them they would do more than plaister over the sores which their own most unjust legislation had created, instead of endeavouring to renovate the constitution and going to the root of the disease, which was well known to the Queen's ministers and hon. members. Mr. Bright further denied the truth of the terrible picture of the loss of limbs and of life in the factories. Amongst the cases adduced to prove this was that of Mr. Samuel Ashton, a large manufacturer and employer of labour. From 1819 to 1830 he employed 400 hands; from 1830 to 1835, 900 hands; from 1835 to 1844, 1,200 hands; and yet amongst all these no fatal accident had occurred during the whole of the period. Cases of accident taken into the infirmaries were frequently described as happening to factory hands when it was

not so. There were far more fatal accidents amongst carters than from all the factories of the United Kingdom. It was merely trifling with legislation to establish a public prosecutor as was intended by this bill. As to alleged cruelties, the Factory Commissioners in their Report stated that to the charge of cruelty brought against millowners, they could give the most decided and unqualified denial. The high rate of wages amongst the operatives rendered them independent and able to resist aggression. The Report further stated that 'as to the immorality said to be engendered by the factory system, the whole current of testimony goes to show that the charges made against cotton factories on this head are calumnies.'

Mr. Bright then contrasted the condition of the operatives with that of the agricultural labourers, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. In schools, places of worship, means of education, wages, and general prosperity, the manufacturing classes were far ahead of the agricultural. Touching on the question of popular literature, the hon. member said he had a note from Mr. W. Chambers, of Edinburgh, stating that of eighty-five thousand copies of their *Chambers' Journal* sold weekly, not less than four-fifths were disposed of in the manufacturing districts. Lanarkshire and Lancashire afforded the greatest number of readers, the latter county alone taking more than twenty thousand copies, while to Dorsetshire (which was Lord Ashley's own county) probably not fifty copies were sent.

Yet he (Mr. Bright) did not deny the sufferings and the wrongs of the manufacturing population. What he contended was, that as respects the remuneration for labour, the state of society, and the general comfort of the population, the cotton districts might stand a comparison with any other in the kingdom. He replied to the statement that a large proportion of the females employed in mills were married, by producing statistics which proved the very reverse. He then contrasted the rarity of parochial relief amongst the operatives with its frequency in the county which the noble lord represented. He also cited the case of a labourer who came from Suffolk, where he and his family of ten had been only able to get 1*s.* 2*d.* per head, per week, whereas when he became employed in Lancashire their earnings rose to 5*s.* per head. But notwithstanding all the facts he had cited, Mr. Bright admitted that there were evils, serious evils, and much distress in the manufacturing districts. But 'hitherto manufacturers have had no fair chance: you have interfered with their natural progress, you have crippled them by your restrictions, you have at times

almost destroyed them by monopolies, you have made them the sources of your public revenue, and the upholders of your rents, but at your hands they have never to this moment received justice and fair dealing.' In announcing that he should vote against Lord Ashley's proposition because it was impracticable, and because under the present oppressive legislation it would make all past injustice only more intolerable, the speaker further said: 'The people ask for freedom for their industry, for the removal of the shackles on their trade; you deny it to them, and then forbid them to labour, as if working less would give them more food, whilst your monopoly laws make food scarce and dear. Give them liberty to work, give them the market of the world for their produce, give them the power to live comfortably, and increasing means and increasing intelligence will speedily render them independent enough and wise enough to bring the duration of labour to that point at which life shall be passed with less of irksome toil of every kind, and more of recreation and enjoyment.

Mr. Bright's speech had a dramatic and personal conclusion. He was compelled to make an *expose* of the sources from whence Lord Ashley had drawn his information in order to show how utterly untrustworthy that information was. He therefore told the noble lord that he had been grossly imposed upon, and that he would never obtain credit for his statements unless he could obtain them from more honest characters than those he had hitherto employed. One of these individuals had published many statements respecting the manufactories in the North, some of which were wholly false, and most of which were grossly and malignantly exaggerated. 'I have in my hand, said Mr. Bright, 'two of these publications. One is *The Adventures of William Dodd, the Factory Cripple*, and the other is entitled *The Factory System*, and consists of letters addressed to the noble lord. Both books have gone forth under the sanction of the noble lord. Dodd states that from the hardships he endured in a factory he was "done up" at the age of thirty-two, whereas I can prove he was treated with uniform kindness, which he repaid by gross immorality of conduct, and for which he was at length discharged from his employment. I have in my possession letters written by this individual, in which he states that the noble lord and his party had used him, as long as they could get anything out of him. He said also that the noble lord had given him dinners at his own house, and that when he applied for a small balance due to him, the noble lord had written him an angry letter, re-

counting the dinners he had eaten at his table. He also stated that the noble lord had shown him to his visitors as a cripple, and as a specimen of what the factories were doing for the population employed in them. I do not wish to dwell upon this point, but I am free to tell the noble lord that unless he employs agents more respectable, his statements and his expressions of benevolence will ever be viewed with suspicion by the manufacturers of the North; and I may add that others who are thus employed are not a whit more creditable than Dodd.'

These revelations naturally caused considerable sensation in the House, and when Mr. Bright sat down, Lord Ashley sprang up to defend himself. The following is an accurate account of what occurred:—

Lord Ashley. 'I think the House will feel that in some measure I have a right to make one or two observations on the remarkable speech of the hon. gentleman: I will thank the hon. gentleman to explain that charge against me which he has insinuated, and which he said he would not pursue. I will not allow it to pass. I therefore throw myself on the indulgence and the protection of this House; and I do request all hon. gentlemen present to exert their influence, as members of this House and as gentlemen, to make the hon. member for Durham pursue his charge and state his case.'

Mr. Bright. 'What is the charge the noble lord alludes to? I told the noble lord that the instruments he carried on his operations with were not worthy of his cause or of him. I am prepared to maintain that assertion. I make no charge against the noble lord. I tell him that I think he is much misled by these men. I am prepared to prove that those agents of the noble lord are of a character that I would not take their evidence with respect to agricultural matters; and I think it is not fair that it should be taken with respect to manufacturing matters. If the noble lord wishes to have information respecting manufacturing affairs, nineteen out of twenty—nay, all the respectable manufacturers in Lancashire, would be willing to give it him.'

Lord Ashley. 'What, no charge? No "unpaid balance," I suppose! No "cripple paraded for exhibition"! Well, if the hon. member says he has made no charge, and if before the assembled Commons of England he is prepared to assert that he made no charge against me, I can assure him with satisfaction that the matter may there rest. But those who heard the hon. gentleman's statement can best judge whether a charge were made; and those who hear me can best judge whether the hon. member had the courage to maintain it.'

Mr. Bright. 'The noble lord is entirely mistaken. I say the noble lord is entirely mistaken if he supposes that I judge of his character by the character of the men in whom I tell him to put no trust. I tell the noble lord plainly that I have letters in my hand which will prove all that I have stated, I will hand them to the noble lord with pleasure. I will go further, and tell the noble lord that the individual who wrote the letters I hold in my hand offered, for a sum of money, to sell a friend of mine a large number of other letters, which that friend of mine was, as I think, too fastidious to lay hold of. I tell the noble lord not to trust these men. I have always thought that the noble lord was honest in his convictions; I have always said so, both in public and in private; but I repeat that the instruments that he has worked with are not worthy of him or of his cause.'

Extracts read from the letters fully corroborated all that Mr. Bright had said, but he again repeated that he had a high respect for the character of Lord Ashley, who in this case had been entirely misled. His lordship accepted Mr. Bright's explanation, and admitted that he had been deceived in the character of his informant Dodd. With this the exciting incident closed.

But Lord Ashley's statements generally in his opening speech had 'vanished into air, into thin air,' under the examination of the hon. member for Durham. It was commonly felt that they had been greatly exaggerated, though the fault lay with others, and not with the noble lord. A word more remains to be said upon this question of factory legislation. Lord Ashley's motion was carried by 179 to 170; and the amendment came on at a later stage in a more substantive form. He now moved to substitute 'ten' for 'twelve' as the hours of labour, but was defeated on this occasion by a majority of seven, in a House composed of nearly four hundred members. Sir James Graham withdrew the bill, and introduced another in its stead. A prolonged discussion took place on the third reading, when Lord Ashley again proposed to limit the hours of labour. During the discussion Mr. Bright replied to the noble lord's second speech, pointing out its inaccuracies and gross exaggerations, as on the first occasion. The manufacturers, he said, desired that the House, instead of passing a measure which would tend to restrict their market and diminish wages, should give to their workmen the means of obtaining sugar, bread, and other necessaries at a lower rate. Lord Ashley's motion was rejected by 297 to 159; and amongst those who voted against it were Mr. Corry, Sir T. E. Colebrooke, Mr. Bright, Mr. J. Evelyn Denison, Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Gladstone, Sir James Graham, Sir W. Heathcote, Mr. Sidney Herbert, Sir Robert Peel, and Mr. Roebuck.

This question has been much misrepresented, and Mr. Bright indicated what he considered to be the true remedy when he demanded Free Trade. In that was to be found the secret of cheaper food, higher wages, and fewer hours of labour.

Towards the close of the session much excitement was caused by a great number of incendiary fires which took place in the Eastern Counties, where terrible distress was prevalent. Mr. Milner Gibson brought the matter under the attention of the House of Commons, and moved an address to Her Majesty representing that there was reason to believe the incendiarism which had for some time prevailed in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex,

and Cambridgeshire was caused by deep discontent among the labouring population of those counties, and praying Her Majesty to issue a Commission to inquire into the condition of the agricultural labourers in those counties, and to ascertain what were the grievances from which they suffered. Sir J. Graham, speaking for the Government, gave the motion his most decided opposition, affirming that Mr. Gibson's speech and the success of his motion would have the effect of swelling the outrages which all deplored.

Mr. Bright delivered a very animated speech in support of the motion. Ever since he had taken his seat in that House, he said, there had been a very strong disinclination to inquire into anything connected with the agriculture of the country. He attributed this to fear lest there should be revelations made against the Corn Laws. Why should we be kept in total ignorance about the produce of the soil? The Government would not issue an inquiry into these fires, although if one fire a month, and not 250 in nine months, had occurred in the manufacturing districts, there would have been loud condemnation of the conduct of the manufacturers towards those they employed. But the *Times* and the *Chronicle* had not forgotten their office, and their commissioners showed that security to property was not compatible with the terrible distress that existed among the labouring population of the Eastern Counties. The Poor Law was a harsh measure, but a man had other evils of no light character before he felt this. 'He must be a miserable legislator indeed who fancies that the Poor Law could secure permanent comfort to the people. The great and all-present evil of the rural districts is this,—you have too many people for the work to be done, and you, the landed proprietors, are alone responsible for this state of things; and, to speak honestly, I believe many of you know it.' Tenants and labourers in Suffolk and other counties were being devoured by excessive competition, whilst the magnanimous landlords sheltered themselves from all competition by the Corn Law which they themselves had passed, and made the competition of all other classes serve to swell still more their rentals. It was for this object the Corn Law was passed, and yet in the face of their countrymen they dared to call it a law for the protection of native industry. Mr. Bright adduced statistics in proof of this. If the League could not force a settlement of this question, the increase of population would. The landlords disregarded all rights but their own. The tenantry were greatly oppressed, too, by the preservation of game. How many lives had been sacrificed

during the past year to the childish infatuation of preserving game? After depicting the misery of the agricultural labourer, the hon. member said, 'I will tell you what your boasted protection is,—it is a protection of native idleness at the expense of the impoverishment of native industry.' He threw back with scorn the imputation that he and his friends desired to produce discord in the rural districts, though that had been attempted for long in the north of England. As 'protection to native industry' had placed the agricultural labourers in hovels, gaols, and union-houses, he recommended them to try another policy—a little fair dealing, a little common humanity, a little common sense. 'Here you sit,' said Mr. Bright, speaking with great energy, 'representatives of the people, legislators of this great commercial empire, making laws for your own exclusive gain, and denying the most natural and incontestable right of all men, the right to live by their industry, to the great mass of those for whom you profess to legislate. You, the magnanimous aristocracy of Britain, you own the soil, you boast of ancestry, you amuse yourselves with much painting on the panels of your coaches—and yet you make laws in this House to enrich your own class at the expense of millions, to whom you deny all political power, and to whom you give no protection whatever. For all this you must one day answer, and the worst I wish you is that, when the time of retribution shall come upon the landed proprietors, it may please Heaven to visit them with more of mercy than they have ever shown to the poor of this country.'

The House was not yet prepared to listen to appeals respecting the Corn Laws, or to stir in the agricultural question at all, and Mr. Gibson's motion was defeated by 130 votes to 41.

Early in the ensuing session—the 27th of February—Mr. Bright moved for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the operation of the Game Laws. In doing so, he enlarged upon the enormous number of offences, conflicts, and outrages which resulted from these laws, and recounted the previous committees which had sat on this question. Besides the great injury inflicted upon farmers generally by the preservation of game, it was notorious that the destruction of grain by game throughout the country was enormous, and far beyond that usually supposed. Even the fear of free trade which prevailed amongst farmers would be mitigated if they knew that game preserving was at the same time to come to an end. Mr. Bright brought forward many cases to show the cruel hardship and injustice to which the Game Laws gave rise. The punish-

ments inflicted upon the poor for offences against these laws were, he insisted, monstrous, when compared with the offences; and the infliction of such punishments destroyed all reverence for the law, and all belief in the impartiality, the wisdom, and the mercy of the Legislature. He could not understand how any man could set his enjoyments and amusements, though abstractedly innocent, in comparison with the great and grievous evils afflicting the country as the result of these laws. 'He could state, with the utmost sincerity, that there was not in his own breast a particle of feeling of hostility towards any human being in connection with this question; but he had seen the sufferings of thousands of the poor and defenceless—of those for whom the law should be a protector—those for whose special good the Parliament and the constitution had been instituted; and he had seen other cases where persons had had their lives sacrified under this system. He had seen cases where persons had been led out to undergo the awful sentence of the law, whilst the public sympathy was decidedly in their favour; and under these circumstances he did think that the House would not be doing justice to those over whom they were called to govern, if they did in any way give encouragement to a system productive of so many grievous evils, not to one class, but to many classes; and not to one district, but to the whole kingdom.'

Sir James Graham, on the part of the Government, consented to the appointment of a committee, the members of which were eventually nominated.

About a month after his exhaustive and impressive speech in the House, Mr. Bright spoke upon the same subject at St. Alban's, in Hertfordshire. It appears that a public dinner was given to a well-known farmer, Mr. Horncastle, as a testimony of the approbation felt by his brother farmers for his courage in exposing the grievances of the Game Laws. Mr. Bright received an invitation to the dinner, and was called upon to speak. After bearing witness to the spirited manner in which Mr. Horncastle had come forward for the purpose of saying what was known to be the opinion of nineteen out of every twenty farmers in the kingdom, Mr. Bright said that it was only fitting such men should be honoured. He had heard it said that there was no spirit amongst farmers; but he had never believed that; it was only slumbering. Referring next to the conditions under which farmers took their land, the speaker asked, 'Is it not notorious that in every county of Great Britain there is, and has been for years past,

a competition for land so fierce that nearly all the bargain is in the hands of the landlord? The effect of this competition is to bid up rent to the very highest point at which it can be hoped to be paid, and to bear down every covenant and right which, under other circumstances, the farmer might reasonably expect to be granted to him for the preservation of his interests.' The farmer gave all his best energies and labour, and yet he was ruined by a system which did no good to any human being whatsoever—the system of game-preserving.

Mr. Bright observed that in moving for a committee in the House of Commons on this subject, he had brought forward cases which had been laughed at in that assembly; and yet he could produce a tenant to show that for a number of years he had expended £1,000 annually in the purchase of artificial manure, but so completely was his farm ravaged by game, that he found it useless to toil and sacrifice his capital and to farm in this manner, and he therefore discontinued this large purchase of artificial manure, and thus to a very great extent diminished the employment of labourers, and consequently lessened their chance of a fair remuneration in the parish in which that farm was situate. By this system the landlords were made the greatest enemies of a class in whose real well-being they had the truest and greatest interest. There were no capitalists in the country who had had so small a return upon their labour and capital as the farmers. He knew more about this question than many of the landlords, and the House of Commons would have been infinitely worse than its greatest calumniator or enemy had ever dared to brand it, had it refused the investigation which he demanded upon the cases he was then able to submit to it. The committee had been chosen fairly, and what they wanted now were specific and accurate statements of damage, and opinions from competent authorities. Upon this question of game-preserving, ninety-nine farmers out of every hundred were entirely agreed. 'Let us have from every county where game-preserving has been carried to any serious extent, a body of witnesses who shall for ever settle the question as respects the particular county. It is not sufficient that I should prove that game-preserving has done alarming mischief in Suffolk or in Wiltshire, for to prove that there is a local malady would not perhaps justify Parliament in applying that which may be termed a general remedy; but what I want is to bring out as much as possible the truth from every county where this nuisance has been oppressive.'

Mr. Bright next exhorted the tenant farmers themselves to

look after their interests, and there was no reason why they should not send their own representatives to Parliament. He hoped that a new era was beginning to dawn. When that era came, the cultivators of the soil—the honourable, ancient, numerous, and most necessary of all classes of the community—would no longer be made the shuttlecock of political parties, but be treated as rational men, and their interests considered in a rational manner.

Another subject which excited great public interest came up in the House of Commons in the session of 1845, viz., the question of the Maynooth grant. On the 3rd of April, Sir Robert Peel proposed a resolution for the improvement of Maynooth College, fixing the grant at £26,000 per annum. It was held by some that the measure would justify the endowment of the Roman Catholic priesthood, and this Lord John Russell described as a larger, more liberal, and more statesmanlike measure. The grant was objected to by others on theological grounds, while a third party saw in it a step towards endowing another Church Establishment in Ireland. The resolution was agreed to by 216 votes to 114, and the bill was brought in and read a first time. On the second reading, the most protracted debate of the session ensued, lasting through six nights.

Mr. Bright opposed the bill, on the ground that an institution purely ecclesiastical was to be paid for out of the public taxes. His attitude was intelligible enough, being that of one opposed to State endowments of religion altogether. He was anxious, however, to make an explanation with regard to the principle on which he should give his vote; and as the matter was one of very great importance, we shall give the chief points of his speech. He held that there was no argument used in defence of the measure which would not be just as valid for the defence of further measures, not for payment of the Catholic priests of Maynooth only, but for the payment of all the priests in Ireland or in England. If the principle were conceded now, ten or twenty years hence some Prime Minister might stand up and state that in 1795 the principle was conceded, and that in 1845 that concession—or rather, that principle—was again sanctioned; and then, arguing from the two cases, it would be easy to demonstrate that it was no violation of principle whatever to establish a new Church in Ireland, and add thereby to the monstrous evils which exist there now from the establishment of one in connection with the State.

Mr. Bright continued: 'The object of this measure was just as objectionable to me when I learned that it was intended by

this vote to soothe the discontent which exists in Ireland. I will look at the causes whence this discontent arises. Does it arise because the priests of Maynooth are now insufficiently clad or fed? I have always thought that it arose from the fact that one-third of the people are paupers—that almost all of them are not in regular employment at the very lowest rate of wages—and that the state of things amongst the bulk of the population is most disastrous, and to be deplored; but I cannot for the life of me conceive how the grant of additional money to Maynooth is to give additional employment, or food, or clothing to the people of Ireland, or make them more satisfied with their condition.' It was a sop given to the priests—hush-money, that they might not proclaim to the whole country, to Europe, and to the world, the sufferings of the population to whom they administered the rites and the consolations of religion. He asserted that the Protestant Church of Ireland was at the root of the evils of that country. The Irish Catholics would rather see that foul blot wiped out than receive collateral endowment. There was Protestant ascendency through everything in Ireland. The object now was to tame the priests of Ireland so that they should not tell of the wrongs of the people.

Observing that he was altogether against this system—for any purpose, under any circumstances, and at any time whatever,—Mr. Bright said that the experience of State Churches was not of a character to warrant the House in going further in the direction of endowment. The Established Churches in England and Scotland had done little good and much evil. There were some Wesleyan Nonconformists who accepted the principle of endowment, and did not seem to value the great principles for which their forefathers struggled and suffered. For himself, he should oppose the bill at every stage, simply on the ground that endowment was most unjust and injurious to the country. In conclusion, the hon. member said,—

'When I look back to the history of this country, and consider its present condition, I must say that all that the people possess of liberty has come, not through the portals of the cathedrals and the parish churches, but from the conventicles, which are despised by hon. gentlemen opposite. When I know that if a good measure is to be carried in this House, it must be by men who are sent hither by the Nonconformists of Great Britain,—when I read and see that the past and present State alliance with religion is hostile to religious liberty, preventing all growth and nearly destroying all vitality in religion itself,—then I shall hold myself to have read, thought, and lived in vain, if I vote for a measure which in the smallest degree shall give any further power or life to the principle of State endowment; and, in conclusion, I will only exhort the Dissenters of England to act in the same way, and to stand upon their own great, pure, and unassailable principle; for if they stand by it man-

fully, and work for it vigorously, the time may come—nay, it will come, when that principle will be adopted by the Legislature of the country.'

The second reading was carried by 323 votes to 176. The division list was a curious one. In the majority were Mr. Bright's intimate friends, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Milner Gibson, and Mr. Villiers, with Lord John Russell, Lord Palmerston, and other Liberals, and Mr. Gladstone, Sir Robert Peel, and many fellow-Conservatives. Mr. Bright was in equally strange company in the minority, which included immovable Conservatives of the Newdegate type, though there were also with him staunch Liberals and Nonconformists. One of the minority tellers was none other than Lord Ashley, Mr. Bright's opponent of the year before in another field.

Another division took place on the order for going into committee, and a further one on the motion for bringing up the report, but the Government had large majorities; and the third reading of the bill was carried by 317 to 184 votes. Even on the question that the bill do pass, it was once more contested, and a division taken. The measure subsequently passed through the House of Lords, after great debate, and became law.

It is worthy of note that during the whole period in which Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright were in the House of Commons together, there were only two occasions on which they were found in different division lobbies. One of these we have referred to above, and the other was in the division which took place in connection with the expenditure over the South Kensington scheme. The project was one in which the Prince Consort took a deep interest, and Mr. Cobden, having been one of the Commissioners for the Great Exhibition, and associated with the Prince, did not wish to separate himself from him in this matter.

CHAPTER V.

THE BATTLE OF THE LEAGUE.

The Corn Law Monopoly.—Manchester after the Reform Bill.—First movements for Repeal.—Cobden's Letters and Pamphlets.—Anti-Corn Law Association formed in 1836.—The Corn Law question in 1837-8.—Formation of the League.—Mr. Bright on the Provisional Committee.—Mr. Paulton's Addresses.—The Manchester Chamber of Commerce petitions against the Corn Laws.—Meeting in 1839.—Mr. Bright's early appearances.—The movement in Manchester.—In Parliament.—The League and the Press.—The Elections of 1841.—Cobden in the House of Commons.—Lamentable Condition of the Country.

We shall now briefly trace the course of that movement which, beginning in very humble guise, and subject in its early stages to the ridicule and contempt of the supporters of Protection, at last became so influential that it wrung from Parliament legislation destructive of a great and powerful monopoly. Of all acts of the Legislature of equal magnitude, the wisdom of that which abolished the Corn Laws has been the least seriously challenged.

Early in the century, and as one result of the war with France, the working classes of England suffered great privations. Taxation was abnormally heavy, and food exceedingly dear. In the year 1801 wheat stood at 115*s.* 11*d.* per quarter, and for the following seventeen years it averaged 84*s.* On the overthrow of Napoleon, and the declaration of peace, the ports were once more thrown open. The agricultural classes, however, now became alarmed, and appealed to Parliament for protection. The result was that in 1815 Parliament—composed chiefly of landlords—passed the Corn Law, an Act which prohibited the importation of wheat, except under an enormous duty, until the price of home-grown reached 80*s.* per quarter. The consequence of this legislation was to raise the price of food to almost as high a figure as it had before attained. In 1816 corn reached 103*s.* 7*d.* per quarter; and in 1817, 112*s.* 8*d.* Great discontent was caused throughout the country, and riots occurred in many places. The oppressive impost was further aggravated by heavy Customs and Excise duties, which were especially and severely felt in Lancashire; and in 1820 the Manchester Chamber of Commerce was established, with the

object of discussing the grievances of the trading classes in that city, and appealing to Parliament for relief.

The effects of the Corn Law monopoly were thus periodically but painfully felt from the second decade of the nineteenth century; but those who desired to see beneficial changes effected in this as well as in other directions felt that the matter was hopeless, unless the necessary preliminary step could be first obtained of a reform of the House of Commons. With this accomplished, religious, social, and other reforms might be expected to follow. All energies were therefore bent towards securing a large measure of Reform, the result being the great Act of 1832. Manchester having now become enfranchised, that city, from the great number of anti-Protectionists in her midst, began to take the lead in the opposition to the Corn Laws. At the first general election consequent on the passing of the Reform Bill, there came forward as candidates Mr. William Cobbett, Mr. Mark Philips, Mr. J. Thomas Hope, and Mr. Samuel Jones Loyd. Mr. Hope was a Conservative, and Mr. Jones Loyd a Whig. Of the other candidates, Mr. Cobbett, in his addresses, made no allusion to the great question which had then begun to attract attention; but Mr. Mark Philips, who was an advocate of short Parliaments and the Ballot, further declared himself an enemy to all restrictions and monopolies, which, depriving alike the capitalist of his remuneration and the labourer of his wages, impeded the natural progress and prosperity of trade. It would be the duty of a reformed Parliament, he said, to abolish the East India, the Bank, and the timber monopolies, and that greatest of all monopolies which was upheld by the Corn Laws. Mr. Philips was, in short, a progressive reformer on almost all points. As Cobbett was distasteful to the great bulk of the Liberals on account of his silence upon the corn monopoly, and as he had also offended the slavery abolitionists of Manchester, it was seen that Loyd must be returned with Philips, unless a second Liberal candidate were brought forward. This was immediately done by the Free-traders, the candidate selected to run in conjunction with Mr. Philips being the Right Hon. C. Poulett Thomson, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, an able and energetic reformer. Philips and Thomson were elected, the former by a large and the latter by a considerable majority. In some other Lancashire towns the efforts made to return progressists were not so successful. The elections generally gave a great majority for Ministers, but it was difficult to tell who were real reformers and who were not; and it was therefore resolved to

strengthen the hands of the Government against the landowners by petitions for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Other practical reforms were also demanded.

Ministers, however, declared that it would embarrass them to have these questions at once brought to the front for settlement, and many reformers became reconciled to this view. But on the 17th of May, 1833, an effort was made, notwithstanding, to enlist the support of Parliament against the Corn Laws, when Mr. Whitmore moved that, instead of producing equality of prices, and thereby a permanent good, they had produced a contrary effect, and tended injuriously to cramp trade. Lord Althorp, Chancellor of the Exchequer, deprecated agitating the question at that moment, when they would not have an opportunity of setting it at rest, owing to the quantity of other business before Parliament. The Ministerial plea was accepted, and the matter was shelved for that session. The 'not-the-time' plea has always been a favourite and potent argument with statesmen when they have desired to stave off legislation upon some pressing question. But the people were not allowed to slumber over the subject of the Corn Laws. Amongst the energetic denouncers of these laws was Mr. Archibald Prentice, proprietor and editor of the *Manchester Times*, who wrote, 'There ought to be a systematic opposition to the continuance of the bread tax. Let half a dozen persons in each of the surrounding towns meet together, and resolve to agitate the question in public meetings. The matter only needs a beginning.' Manchester did indeed say something on the topic, by a public meeting held early in 1834, attended by several members of Parliament and other influential gentlemen. A committee was formed for the purpose of considering how the cause of Corn Law repeal might best be forwarded, but at that time nothing could be done. The people had scarcely as yet begun to be educated on this question.

In the House of Commons a motion was brought forward for a committee, with the view of substituting a fixed duty on corn in lieu of the fluctuating scale. The landowners were at once up in arms. Mr. Feargus O'Connor said the ruin of Ireland would follow the admission of corn duty free; but Mr. Poulett Thomson (though unsupported by his colleagues) took a larger and prophetic view of the subject when he said, 'Let them wait until one of those fluctuations should, under Providence, occur, through a failure of the harvest in France, and then a change of the Corn Laws would be called for in much less respectful language than he should ever wish to hear addressed to that

House.' Mr. Hume's motion, however, was negatived by 313 to 155 votes. Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law Rhymer, in a stirring address to the people of England, called upon the masses to repudiate at once and for ever the idea of a fixed duty, which he described as 'graduated iniquity.' He strongly advocated a union of all the great towns. 'Put not in the banns for a new marriage of reptile-spawning fraud and time; but with the word Restitution, pronounced in thunder, startle your oppressors from their hideous dream of injustice and ruin made permanent.' As trade was tolerably good, and the pinch of poverty was not felt, this appeal, and others like it, failed to have any appreciable effect. Towards the end of the year 1834 the Whig Ministry was dismissed, and Sir Robert Peel installed as Premier. But early in the following year the Whigs once more returned to office, and the Corn Law repealers saw their cause pushed still further back by the plentiful supply of corn there was in the country, which led to a demand from the agricultural members for an increased protection rather than no protection at all.

The year 1835 also witnessed an abundant harvest; and with wheat at four shillings and sixpence a bushel, there was little desire to agitate for the repeal of an unjust law—a law which operated with terribly injurious force in periods of deficient harvests. At this time, Mr. Prentice printed in the columns of the *Manchester Times* several well-written letters from an unknown correspondent. From these letters he concluded that there was a new man rising up, who, if he held a station that would enable him to take a part in public affairs, would exert a widely beneficial influence amongst the people. Shortly afterwards a pamphlet was published entitled *England, Ireland, and America.* A copy was sent to Mr. Prentice, 'from the author,' and the handwriting showed it to be by his anonymous correspondent. It was further revealed that the writer was Richard Cobden. The meeting of the two men is thus described by the historian of the League: 'I found a man who could enlighten by his knowledge, counsel by his prudence, and conciliate by his temper and manners; and who, if he found his way into the House of Commons, would secure its respectful attention; but I had been an actor amongst men who, from 1812 to 1832, had fought in the rough battle for Parliamentary Reform, and I missed, in the unassuming gentleman before me, not the energy, but the apparent hardihood and dash which I had, forgetting the change of times, believed to be requisites to the success of a popular leader. In after-

years, and when—having attained great platform popularity—he had been elected a member of Parliament, and when men sneered and said he would soon find his level there, as other mob orators had done, I ventured to say that he would be in his proper vocation there, and that his level would be amongst the first men in the House.' * In his pamphlet, Cobden strongly advocated the doctrine of Free Trade and non-intervention in the affairs of other States. The *brochure* was circulated by tens of thousands. Amongst other forcible means employed for rousing public opinion on the question, were Colonel Thompson's *Catechism of the Corn Law*, Cobden's *Russophobia*, and numerous articles in the *Westminster Review*, and various other periodicals and newspapers.

At length, in 1837, the time was ripe for systematic effort, an impetus having been furnished by a rise in the price of corn, the unsatisfactory condition of the money market, and the failure of certain banks. Accordingly, an Anti-Corn-Law Association was formed in London, and on the Committee were the following members of Parliament: Messrs. Joseph Brotherton, J. Silk Buckingham, J. Blackburne, W. Clay, P. Chalmers, T. S. Duncombe, H. Elphinstone, W. Ewart, George Grote, D. W. Harvey, B. Hawes, Joseph Hume, J. T. Leader, Sir W. Molesworth, J. Pattison, R. Potter, J. A. Roebuck, J. Scholefield, Col. Thompson, C. A. Talk, T. Wakley, and R. Wallace. Amongst other members of the Committee were Mr. John Marshall, Mr. Archibald Prentice, Mr. Laman Blanchard, Mr. William Tait, and the three popular writers and poets, Thomas Campbell, Ebenezer Elliott, and William Howitt. In the following March, Mr. Clay moved in the House of Commons the adoption of a fixed duty of ten shillings a quarter on wheat. There voted for the motion 89, and against 223; but in the minority were no fewer than ten members connected with the Government.

On the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, a general election took place, and notwithstanding the waning popularity of the Melbourne Ministry, they were supported by a majority of the country, not because they approved the policy of the Whigs, so much as to exclude the Tories from office. Manchester again elected Thomson and Philips; and Salford, Wigan, and Oldham followed its example in returning reformers. The total number

* *History of the Anti-Corn-Law League.* By Archibald Prentice, one of its Executive Council, author of 'Historical Sketches of Manchester,' etc. To this work, and to the *League* newspaper, I have frequently recurred in the preparation of the ensuing sketch of the Free Trade movement.

of votes in some fifty boroughs, which returned between seventy and eighty Protectionists, did not exceed the vote of Manchester alone. Thirty-eight members strongly favourable to progressive measures were returned by London, Westminster, Marylebone, Nottingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, and other places, representing about five millions of the population. Mr. Cobden declared that with the ballot these numbers would have been greatly increased. In the session of 1838 several efforts were made in the House of Commons to procure a modification of the Corn Laws; but the large majorities against this showed that the House was little inclined to be disturbed in the matter, and the conviction began to force itself upon the Free-traders that outward pressure must be had recourse to. At the beginning of July, Earl Fitzwilliam presented a petition to the House of Lords from Glasgow, praying for the repeal of the Corn Law, and supporting its prayer. During the debate, Lord Melbourne significantly said that the Government would not take a decided part till it was certain the majority of the people were in favour of a change. This declaration virtually indicated the policy of the Free-traders. By the end of August the average price of wheat had risen to 77*s.*, or about double the price which ruled at the close of the harvest of 1835. Mr. Joseph Sturge, Colonel Thompson, and others now urged instant action.

The League was formed about this time, in the following manner. A Dr. Birnie having announced a lecture on the Corn Laws in the Bolton Theatre towards the close of July, 1838, a good audience assembled, and the lecturer was well received. He appears, however, to have acquitted himself so indifferently in his task, that Mr. Thomas Thomasson, turning to a young medical student named A. W. Paulton, said, 'Do, Paulton, get on the stage and say something, and don't let such a meeting be lost.' Paulton went round to the stage, and asked the people to hear him for a few moments. He spoke very acceptably for about twenty minutes, and it was ultimately arranged that he should deliver a lecture in the theatre on the 6th of August. On that night, to a crowded audience, Paulton dealt with the question in a full and able manner, and one which deeply enlisted the feelings of the audience. At Manchester the question was still further discussed in a meeting hastily called to welcome Dr. Bowring, who was on his way to Blackburn. At this meeting, Mr. James Howie proposed that the company then present should at once form themselves into an Anti Corn Law Association. The proposition

was well received, and those favourable to it were requested to meet again on the following Monday evening. M. Frederic Bastiat, in his work upon Cobden and the League, observes: 'Seven men united themselves at Manchester in the month of October, 1838; and with that manly determination which characterizes the Anglo-Saxon race, they resolved to overturn every monopoly by legal means, and accomplish without disturbance, without effusion of blood, with the power only of opinion, a revolution as profound, perhaps more profound, than that which our fathers worked to effect in 1789.' These seven men, who were present at the first meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law Association at the York Hotel, Manchester, on the 24th of September, 1838, were the following: Edward Baxter, W. A. Cunningham, Andrew Dalziel, James Howie, James Leslie, Archibald Prentice, and Philip Thomson. From their names it would seem that all these earnest men were Scotchmen. To give the League a popular foundation, and to include all classes, it was resolved that the subscription should be only five shillings.

On the 13th of October, a Provisional Committee was advertised, which included the following names: Messrs. Elkanah Armitage, John Bright, W. R. Callender, George Hadfield, Alex. Henry, Thomas Potter, Absalom Watkin, and George Wilson, with John Benjamin Smith as treasurer. The week afterwards there were added to the committee, in addition to many others, Messrs. Ashworth, Cobden, John Edward Taylor, and Samuel Watts. The members of the Provisional Committee were liberal subscribers towards the expenses of the movement in its earlier stages; and it appears that at a later period, when a call was made for a £250,000 League Fund, these same gentlemen alone subscribed a total sum of £10,600.

At the first lecture delivered by Mr. Paulton on behalf of the Association in the Corn Exchange, it was stated that the organization was established on the same righteous principle as the Anti-Slavery Society. The object of that society was to obtain the free right for the negroes to possess their own flesh and blood; the object of the new society was to obtain the free right of the people to exchange their labour for as much food as could be got for it; that the people might no longer be obliged by law to buy their food at one shop, and that the dearest in the world, but be at liberty to go to that in which it could be obtained cheapest. Mr. Paulton's address was received with great enthusiasm. In a second lecture, he demonstrated the utter inadequacy of the sliding scale as a means of supply-

ing food to the labouring man, denounced the injustice of the law and the legislative inventors of it, and concluded by quoting these lines from Lord Byron's *Age of Bronze*—lines which were warmly applauded, and which were frequently afterwards made use of by the advocates of Free Trade:—

> 'For what were all these landed patriots born?
> To hunt, and vote, and raise the price of corn.
> Safe in their barns these Sabine tillers sent
> Their brethren out to battle—why?—for rent!
> Year after year they voted cent. per cent.,
> Blood, sweat, and tear-wrung millions: why?—for rent!
> They roared, they dined, they drank: they swore they meant
> To die for England. Why then live?—for rent!
> And will they not repay the treasures lent?
> No! down with everything, and up with rent!
> Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, and discontent,
> Being, end, aim, religion—rent! rent! rent!'

Paulton, who seems to have been both eloquent and imbued with a sense of the complete justice of the cause, was now invited to attend great meetings in other towns, and the opinion fast spread, alike in the centres of population and the agricultural districts, that the Corn Laws were injurious to the interests of all classes of the country.

The Manchester Chamber of Commerce was stirred to action, and at one of its meetings, Mr. Cobden, after showing the evil effects of restriction upon trade, entreated the members not to suffer themselves to be deluded by any other plan which the aristocracy might, with a view to lead them upon a wrong scent, propose to do, whether by war or diplomacy, to benefit trade. He exhorted them to keep a steadfast eye on the Corn Law, which was the real and only obstacle to a steady and large increase of their trade. In the end, a petition to Parliament, drawn up by Mr. Cobden, was adopted by the Chamber. The petition set forth the disadvantages under which British trade and manufactures laboured, and thus proceeded: 'Your petitioners cannot too earnestly make known that the evils are occasioned by our impolitic and unjust legislation, which by preventing the British manufacturer from exchanging the produce of his labour for the corn of other countries, enables our foreign rivals to purchase their food at one-half the price at which it is sold in this market; and your petitioners declare it to be their solemn conviction that this is the commencement only of a state of things which, unless arrested by a timely repeal of all protective duties upon the importation of corn and all foreign articles of subsistence, must eventually transfer our manufacturing

industry into other and rival countries.' This petition contained in brief the chief arguments of the Free-Traders, holding it to be the inalienable right of every man freely to exchange the results of his labour for the productions of other people, and maintaining that the practice of protecting one part of the community at the expense of all other classes was unsound and unjustifiable.

The members of the League did not underrate the difficulties of the task upon which they had entered. They were opposed by the landowners, by monopolists of all kinds, and by large majorities in the Legislature, the Church, and the State. But they believed themselves to be capable of gaining the support of a united people; and the great body of the people is after all the most powerful, and the only truly irresistible force in this kingdom. Early in January 1839, a meeting was held at the York Hotel, to consider the proper mode of carrying forward the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law Association, in a manner commensurate with the magnitude of the obstacles to be surmounted, and worthy of the object for which it had been established. Mr. Holland Hoole, a Conservative, took the chair, representing, he said, all the people in his employment, who with himself were threatened with destruction by the operation of the Corn Laws. Subscriptions were called for, and in a short time a sum of £6,136 was announced.

Besides being actively opposed by the Tories, the movement was now seriously obstructed by the Chartists, under the mistaken idea that the repeal of the Corn Laws would be followed by a diminution in the price of labour. One other misunderstanding in connection with the movement may be mentioned here. Miss Harriet Martineau, in her *History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace*, while paying a high tribute to the Free-trade leaders, observed that 'they were surprised to find how little they themselves knew when they first devoted themselves to the cause. The deepest of them had scarcely an idea how closely the interests of the agriculturists were involved in the establishment of a free trade in food, and how society was injured through all its ramifications by an artificial restriction in the first article of human necessity.' Now Mr. Prentice avers, in reply to this, that from the very commencement of the agitation, the mutual dependence of agricultural and manufacturing interests had been made a strong point by the advocates of free commerce. Certainly the speeches of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright on this question show that they were fully alive to the fact that the

interests of commerce and agriculture were in a mutual and equal degree bound up in Free-trade measures.

Delegate meetings were now held in London, Manchester, and other places; and Mr. Villiers—who was amongst the earliest and most earnest pioneers in the movement—periodically disturbed the complacency of the Protectionist majority of the House of Commons by motions on the subject of the Corn Laws; but although the majority against him showed symptoms of decline, it still continued to be great and formidable. The organization now assumed a larger character, and in 1839 became formally known as the National Anti-Corn-Law League. An organ of the new movement, entitled the *Anti-Corn-Law Circular* appeared in Manchester, and in the course of a few weeks attained a circulation of fifteen thousand copies, though this did not represent its entire influence, as it was passed from hand to hand. The monopolists became alarmed, and their association, 'The Central Agricultural Society of Great Britain and Ireland,' set to work to counteract the influence of the League. But the establishment of the penny postage placed a wonderful engine at the service of the latter.*

Mr. Bright early took part in the movement, his name, as we have seen, standing second on the list of the first provisional committee. On the 2d of February, 1839, an Anti-Corn-Law meeting was held in the open air at Rochdale. Several thousand persons were present, and the Chartists—whose erroneous views we have already referred to—mustered in great force. Mr. Bright spoke for the first time on the question of Free Trade, and moved the following resolution: 'That it is the opinion of this meeting that the Corn Laws have had the effect of crippling the commerce and manufactures of the country—have raised up rival manufactories in foreign countries—have been most injurious and oppressive in their operation upon the great bulk of our population,—and that the working classes have been grievously injured by this monopoly of the landed

* By way of showing also that the intellectual press of London was ahead of the nation in this matter of the Corn Laws, we may state that in the year 1839 the following influential journals earnestly advocated repeal—the *Sun*, the *Athenæum*, the *Spectator*, the *Dispatch*, the *Planet*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Advertiser*, the *Globe*, the *Examiner*, the *Patriot*, the *Charter* and the *Weekly True Sun*. Nor must the conspicuous service rendered by some fifty provincial journals of ability be forgotten. These included the *Scotsman*, the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Manchester Times*, the *Aberdeen Herald*, the *Birmingham Journal*, the *Bradford Observer*, the *Liverpool Chronicle*, the *Sheffield Independent*, the *Dundee Advertiser*, the *Brighton Herald*, and the *Bolton Free Press*.

proprietors.' Mr. Bright dwelt upon the fact that it was not a party question, for men of all parties were united upon it. It was a pantry question, he maintained—in homely but forcible language—a knife-and-fork question, a question between the working millions and the aristocracy. Before the American tariff was laid on, one-fifth of the flannel manufactured in Rochdale went to America; but since that tariff was imposed, which was in consequence of the Corn Laws, there had not been as many pieces sent there as there had been bales before. It was the duty of the Government to protect the rights of industry, and it was the interest of the working classes to assist in calling for the repeal of the Corn Laws. After Mr. Bright's speech, Mr. James Taylor, a Chartist, proposed an amendment to the effect that although the Corn Law was an injurious tax, no House of Commons constituted on the existing suffrage would repeal that law; and therefore it was necessary first that the people should obtain possession of their political rights. The amendment was carried, the Chartists at that moment having the ear of the working classes in the chief towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Mr. Cobden having pressed Mr. Bright to assume a more prominent part in the League movement, the latter spoke in public on the question (for the first time save at Rochdale) at a dinner given at Bolton in 1839 to Mr. Paulton. He is described as being then a young man, 'giving evidence, by his energy and his grasp of the subject, of his capacity soon to take a leading part in the great agitation.' Shortly afterwards, that is on the 29th of January, 1840, he attended a meeting called at Rochdale for the purpose of forming a branch of the League, on which occasion he explained its objects. A committee was formed, of which he was appointed treasurer; and in the course of a few weeks a petition against the Corn Laws was forwarded to the House of Commons. The movement must have taken deep root in a short time, for the petition embraced nearly ten thousand signatures. Evidence was in fact furnished daily of the great and growing interest now taken in this question.

In the year 1840 it was resolved to build the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, Mr. Cobden, who owned nearly all the unoccupied land in St. Peter's Field, offering a site for that purpose. By a singular coincidence it happened to be the very spot where, in the year 1819, the Peterloo massacre occurred. Pending the erection of the permanent hall for the purposes of the League, a temporary pavilion was constructed, and on the 13th of January an imposing demonstration was held, attended by

nearly thirty members of Parliament, and delegates from all parts of the country. Mr. Bright was present as one of the Rochdale delegates. The principal speakers were Daniel O'Connell, Mr. Villiers, and Mr. Cobden. In a note upon the meeting, we read that a 'Suffolk landowner, Thomas Milner Gibson, appeared on this occasion, for the first time, before a Manchester audience, and by his youthful and gentlemanly appearance, and by the mingled good humour and pungency with which he demolished the arguments and statements of men of his own class, from whom he had come out to make common cause with the people, made a most favourable impression.'

Great meetings now followed each other in rapid succession, and deputations of delegates waited upon Lord Melbourne, and other members of the Ministry, but nothing more substantial was obtained than the usual exhibition of official politeness. Mr. Villiers renewed his motion in the House of Commons, but could scarcely obtain a hearing in consequence of the uproar on the Protectionist benches. Mr. Mark Philips also made an unsuccessful attempt to be heard amid the deafening clamour, and the motion was lost by 300 to 177. In the country, ladies now began to give their services in aid of the movement. One old lady, eighty years of age, assured Mr. Prentice that in her daily prayers for daily bread she also prayed for a blessing on the good work of Richard Cobden, and of all who were labouring that the afflicted poor should enjoy, in their humble homes, an abundance of the gifts which God had bestowed for the use of man. In the Manchester Corn Exchange, a great gathering was held on October 29th, chiefly consisting of ladies, in support of the agitation. Replying to the charge of those who complained of the want of delicacy in the ladies who thus took the part of the poor and the needy, M. Bastiat says, 'Because the times are changed; because the age is advanced; because muscular force has given place to moral energy; because injustice and oppression borrow other forms, and strife is removed from the field of battle to the conflict of ideas, shall the mission of woman be terminated? Shall she always be restricted to the rear in the social movement? Shall it be forbidden to her to exercise over new customs her benignant influence, or to foster under her regard the virtues of a more elevated order which modern civilisation has called into existence? No! This cannot be. There is no point in the upward movement of humanity at which the empire of woman stops for ever. As civilisation transforms and elevates itself, this empire must be transformed and elevated with it, not anni-

hilated;—there would then be an inexplicable void in the social harmony, and in the providential order of things.' No class of the people could be more deeply interested in the abrogation of the Corn Laws than the women of the existing and the mothers of a future generation.

In 1840 the League made large use of the press in the dissemination of its views. It appears that during this year 763 petitions, with 775,840 signatures, were sent to the House of Commons; and 22, with 78,000 signatures, to the House of Lords. Handbills and tracts to the number of a million and a quarter were distributed, as well as 20,000 copies of the *Anti-Corn-Law Almanack*, and 330,000 copies of the *Anti-Corn-Law Circular*. In the following year the association was equally active. On the 15th of April, at a meeting held in Manchester, at which some two thousand persons were present, Mr. Bright moved a resolution that members of Parliament should be waited upon and invited to support Mr. Villiers's forthcoming motion. He spoke, it is said, effectively, but very briefly, on the misery occasioned by the Corn Laws. At a later meeting, these resolutions, proposed by Mr. Bright, were adopted: 'That under the more encouraging circumstances in which this question of the bread tax is now placed, it is highly expedient that redoubled efforts be made to obtain a full expression of public opinion in condemnation of that unjust and inhuman enactment;' and 'That, in order to carry into effect the foregoing resolution, a deputation shall be sent to Birmingham, Hull, Bristol, and Newcastle, and such other towns as the Council think proper, in order to rouse the inhabitants to the absolute necessity of making increased exertions to forward petitions to the House of Commons at this important crisis of the great question of the repeal of the bread tax.' An address, written by Mr. George Wilson, chairman of the Council of the League, was also distributed throughout the kingdom.

On the 27th of May, Sir Robert Peel's motion in the House of Commons declaratory of a want of confidence in the Whig Government was carried by a majority of one, the numbers being, for the motion, 312; against, 311. Upon this, Lord John Russell said Ministers intended to appeal to the country, and Parliament was at once dissolved. In the elections which ensued, Mr. Cobden was elected for Stockport, it being expected that he would take a leading part in Parliament upon the Free-trade question. Mr. Bright was present in the House when Mr. Cobden made his first speech, and subsequently gave a description of the scene. The great Leaguer's maiden effort

excited considerable interest; and there was much speculation, said Mr. Bright, as to the position he would take in the House. Mr. Horace Twiss (of the *Times*), near whom in the gallery Mr. Bright sat, was a Tory of the old school. 'He appeared to have the greatest possible horror of anybody who was a manufacturer or a calico printer coming down into the assembly to teach our senators wisdom. As the speech went on, I watched his countenance, and heard his observations; and when Mr. Cobden sat down, he said with a careless gesture, "Nothing in him; he is only a barker." . . . Well, now, I believe, there is no reason to doubt the fact that some of Mr. Cobden's speeches —one in particular that I recollect in connection with the effect of protection on agriculture—had such an effect upon the mind and opinions of Sir Robert Peel that if I were to point out any one thing that mainly brought Sir Robert Peel to be a Free-trader not long afterwards, I should point to the speech made on that particular night by Mr. Cobden. This "barker" of Horace Twiss became a great power in the House of Commons, and a great power in the country. Now I had the good fortune after the year 1841, and for five years, and, in fact, for something longer than five years, to be most intimately and closely associated with him in his labour. I can speak of his industry and his sagacity, of the incessant correspondence in which he was engaged, and I can speak also of the speeches he delivered. I remember the beautiful and yet homely illustrations with which they were filled. I recollect well how at every meeting he attended I could see the truth, as it were, spreading from his lips, and permeating the minds of all those who heard him, till you could see in their countenances and eyes that they had got hold of a new truth that they would keep for ever.' While not an orator of the first rank, Mr. Cobden had qualities which enabled him to secure for himself a position in the House of Commons at once powerful and unique.

The elections went against Ministers, and, being defeated upon the Address by a majority of 91 in the Commons, they resigned. Sir Robert Peel accordingly became Prime Minister. Meanwhile, the League did not relax its energies, and it was now assisted by a great religious movement in favour of the agitation. The condition of the country at this time was lamentable. Statistics collected showed that there were no fewer than 20,936 persons in Leeds whose average earnings were only elevenpence three-farthings a week. One-fourth of the whole population of Paisley was in a state bordering upon actual starvation; and in one district in Manchester a visitor

found 258 families, consisting of 1,029 persons, whose average earnings were only sevenpence halfpenny per head per week. 'In Spitalfields,' said Mr. Dunckley, in his *Charter of Nations*, '8,000 looms were idle, and 24,000 persons thrown upon parochial relief. In the metropolis 1,000 letterpress printers and 9,000 tailors were altogether without work.' The same tale of suffering came from all the great manufacturing towns; and the terrible condition of the people was further aggravated by the fact that wheat, which stood at an exceedingly high price, was charged an import duty of nearly twenty-five shillings per quarter.

The year set in gloom upon the great masses of the population, and not without a dawning conviction upon the mind of the new Conservative Prime Minister that a relaxation of the restrictive laws which perpetuated and aggravated the distress of the country was fast becoming imperative.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE OF THE LEAGUE (*continued*).

Great Distress among the Working Classes.—Meeting of Free-trade Delegates in London in February, 1842.—Sir Robert Peel's Sliding Scale.—Continued Destitution in the Country.—The Duke of Sussex and the League.—Scene outside the House of Commons.—Deputations to Ministers.—The Chartist Rising.—Mr. Bright issues an Address to the Working Men of Rochdale.—Tour through the Midlands.—Mr. Bright in the North.—Lord Brougham and the Repealers.—Opening of the Free Trade Hall at Manchester.—Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Cobden.—Extraordinary Scene in the House of Commons.—Sympathy in the country with Mr. Cobden.—Speech by Mr. Bright.—Carlyle on the Corn Laws.—League Meetings at Drury Lane Theatre.—The Agitation in 1843.—Tour of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright.—The Question in the House of Commons.—The League gains influential Adherents.—Meetings in 1844.—Demonstration in Covent Garden Theatre.—Address by Mr. Bright.—Registration Movement by the League.—Increase of Freeholds.—Peel's Budget of 1845.—Mr. Cobden's Motion on the Agricultural Distress.—Great Free-Trade Bazaar at Covent Garden.—Mr. Villiers's last Motion on the Corn Laws in the House of Commons.—Speeches of Sir J. Graham, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Cobden.—The Question approaching its final Settlement.

Towards the close of the year 1841, the League appointed commissioners to investigate the appalling condition of the working classes, and the details collected of their suffering and destitution were most heartrending. At a meeting held at Manchester on the 16th of December to consider the depression in the manufacturing districts, Mr. Bright presented an account of the state of things in Rochdale, where the flannel trade had been almost annihilated in consequence of the American tariff, the inevitable effect of the diminished demand for flannel goods being scarcity of employment and a fall of wages. 'We saw around us,' said Mr. Bright, 'wide-spreading distress. Misery was seen in the house of every poor man. Poor men he was ashamed to call them, but that was the term now applied to every working man. Misery was to be seen on his very threshold; haggard destitution and extreme poverty were the most prominent things in his family. The consequence was that discontent had so pervaded the country that scarcely any working man would lift a finger in defence of those institutions which Englishmen were wont to be proud of. Neither the monarch nor the aristocracy were safe under such a state of things—a

state of things that would blast the fairest prospects and destroy the most powerful nation that ever existed. On the motion of Mr. Bright, this resolution was carried:—'That the district of which Manchester is the centre, engaged in the various branches of the cotton trade and its dependencies, is suffering under a general depression, the duration of which has no parallel in the history of Lancashire; that it is in evidence before this meeting that the condition of the surrounding population, both employer and operative, is greatly deteriorated; that fixed capital, such as buildings, machinery, etc., has depreciated in value nearly one-half since 1835; that capitalists, as a body, have long ceased to obtain a profitable return for their investments; that bankruptcy and insolvency have alarmingly increased; that the shopkeepers have suffered corresponding reverses; that the reward of labour has been generally diminished; that great numbers of skilful and deserving workmen are either wholly or partially unemployed; and that pauperism, disease, crime, and mortality have made fearful inroads amongst the poorer classes of the community; that, in the opinion of the deputies now assembled from the various towns of Lancashire, all these evils are experienced at the present moment with unmitigated severity, and that there is no visible prospect of any amelioration of the distresses of this great community.'

Early in 1842 meetings were held at Gloucester, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow—and in fact throughout the length and breadth of the land,—and at many of them farmers attended, who unhesitatingly admitted that they had no reason to fear for the ruin of their order from the working classes of the manufacturing towns being permitted their just right to exchange the produce of their industry for food raised in foreign lands.

Pending an anticipated measure from Ministers for the revision of the Corn Laws, an important meeting of Free-trade delegates was held in London on the 8th of February, 1842, at the Crown and Anchor, Strand. Mr. Duncan M'Laren, afterwards M.P. for Edinburgh, presided, and amongst the speakers was Mr. Bright, who now stepped into the front rank of the repealers. His address was full of power, and its effect was such that every future appearance of the orator was eagerly looked forward to, and welcomed with delight. On this occasion, Mr. Bright said he came from a neighbourhood where the question was looked upon as one of life and death by thousands of honest men; and if there were any in that room, as there were many, who had no conception of the state of things to

which this country was fast hastening under these mischievous laws, he should like them to go with him into the streets and lanes where he could take them, and if they had any intellect, any heart, he was sure they would go away fully convinced of the necessity of the total and immediate repeal of the law. Referring to the flannel trade of his native town, he said that he was not interested in it in any way, but he knew the extent to which the Corn Laws had operated against that trade. Several thousand persons in his neighbourhood were driven from their country as the result of the operation of the Corn Laws. Amidst general cheering, Mr. Bright said that in consequence of the glaring evils of those laws, he had turned his attention to them day and night, and he was firmly convinced that there was no point of view in which they did not manifest their evil operation, and call for total and immediate abolition. He stated that his motion was to pledge the deputies never to swerve from their purpose, nor relax in their efforts, until the total repeal of the Corn Laws was accomplished; and this he enforced 'with so much argument, and so energetic and fervent an eloquence, that at the close of his spirit-stirring address the whole assembly rose and testified their approbation by loud and long-continued hurrahs.' From this time forward, Mr. Bright came into special prominence, and his name was now coupled with those of the other popular leaders in the movement—Cobden, Villiers, and Wilson. In conjunction with them he was instrumental in forming many provincial branches of the League.

Sir Robert Peel's measure providing for a sliding scale in the duty on corn was carried during this session, after prolonged debates. During one of these debates, Mr. Cobden said that upon the shoulders of the Premier would the people fix the whole of the responsibility for their present position. On the third reading he further entered a solemn protest against the bill, denouncing it as a robbery of the poor. The new tariff with the sliding scale became law; and the best proof that it was inadequate to meet the necessities of the case was the relief felt by the Protectionists that they had come off so cheaply.

The members of the Anti-Corn-Law Conference again assembled on the 4th of July, at Herbert's Hotel Palace Yard. Mr. P. A. Taylor presided, and Mr. Bright was the first speaker. He observed that the distress had now become universal. If they went to Scotland, they found Forfar, Glasgow, Paisley, in desolation. If they came further south, in Newcastle almost the whole of the working population were

out of employment, and were living on the charity given out by the Town Council. He had a letter from Shields, in which it was stated that the trade was almost annihilated. In Lancashire, the working population of many towns were actually subsisting on charity. Bolton and Stockport were in a state of desolation. In Leeds it was still worse; there were thirty or forty thousand persons existing on charity alone. In Sheffield, men were driven to the lowest state of distress; and it was the same in Derbyshire. He had seen a letter in the *Morning Chronicle*, giving an account of the state of Hinckley, in Leicestershire, and he would recommend all to read it, as it gave a faithful picture of the prevalent distress. Going still further south, in the agricultural counties of England the poor-rates were at that moment rapidly on the increase. The labouring population of Somersetshire were living on charity. If they went on to that part of the country, they would find that twenty or thirty thousand persons were now out of employment who were a short time before in comparative comfort. In Ireland they found that famine was stalking through the land, and that riots were taking place, men being killed by the police merely because they endeavoured to obtain food. How, then, could they sit calmly by? Humanity, if nothing more, would call them from their homes. But there was a feeling of policy—their own safety and the safety of the country were at stake. Mr. Bright added that there was one remedy, but it had been rejected by the Legislature. Much would depend on the course taken by the delegates, and he prayed that they might enable the Government to see that the time had come when this question could no longer be tampered with; that the time had arrived when justice and mercy must take the place of cruelty and oppression; and if the Government should still refuse to hearken, he for one trembled at the result.

Observing that the people themselves had the power to compel a settlement of this question, Mr. Bright added: 'There were other weapons than those of war; there were other weapons besides those which wounded the body; there was a most beautiful and admirable system which the people had in their own power, to which he was fully persuaded they were rapidly drifting, and which, if put into active operation, could not fail to bring the struggle to an active issue.'

Mr. Bright's statements as to the condition of the country were abundantly corroborated by other delegates. The representative from Wolverhampton stated that there were sixty-two blast furnaces lying idle; and the Stockport delegate stated

that a poor-rate in that town, which in 1839 at 1*s.* 8*d.* had produced £5,000, now failed to produce £3,600 at 2*s.* The poor-rate at Manchester went up to 3*s.* 4*d.* in the pound. At Burslem, the people became greatly excited, and the military required to be called out.

At this juncture the cultured and liberal-minded Duke of Sussex expressed his sympathy with the objects of the League. A deputation had been appointed to wait upon him, and Mr. Bright reported that he and his coadjutors had been received by his Royal Highness with the utmost cordiality and friendliness. Although he did not think that everything wrong was to be attributed to the Corn Laws, he admitted that they had been the occasion of a great deal of evil, and he himself had always been strenuously opposed to them. His Royal Highness, said Mr. Bright, appeared to be exceedingly well informed on the subject, and it was evident he kept well up with the newspapers. He promised to do everything in his power to further their object, and, if they wished it, would find a way of presenting a memorial to the Queen; but she could not give them a reply, as she could not constitutionally do acts of sovereignty except through the agency of her Ministers. The Duke expressed great commiseration with the distress of the country, and the deputation had come away with a good opinion both of his heart and his understanding.

The delegates continued vigorously to prosecute their mission; and on one occasion, being denied admission into the lobby of the House of Commons, they congregated round the entrance, shouting 'Total repeal' and 'Cheap food' as the members entered. Meeting on their retirement from the House the carriage of Sir Robert Peel, their cries caused the Premier to lean back in his carriage, with a pale and grave countenance. The delegates next waited upon the Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, to whom they unfolded their story; but Sir James for the moment seemed unable to conceive that there was general and severe distress in the country, because a few new mills had been erected in Manchester! Mr. Bright deprecated making the question one of mills, or of Manchester only; the greatest distress prevailed where there were no mills. Proceeding next to the Board of Trade, the deputation waited upon Lord Ripon ('Prosperity Robinson') and Mr. Gladstone. This was the first public occasion on which the present Premier and Mr. Bright, now his colleague, met. Allusion having been made to the United States, Lord Ripon said that the Americans themselves had a law against the admission of Canadian wheat; whereupon

Mr. Bright retorted, 'Yes, and the promoters of that measure quoted our example as a precedent.' The President of the Board of Trade declined to discuss the question at length. Mr. Gladstone inquired whether there were any symptoms of improvement in trade, but was answered that the distress, so far from being alleviated, was greatly aggravated. With this the conference closed. Sir Robert Peel himself, however, at the close of an interview with one of the deputation, thanked its members for the testimony they had borne, and which he feared was incontestable.

The Chartists at this time exercised great influence over the factory workers in the large towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Cheshire; and there was a strong turn-out of hands in Ashton-under-Lyne, Manchester, Dukinfield, Oldham, Stalybridge, and other places. It was feared that riots would ensue, especially as in Manchester a public procession was talked of, and Feargus O'Connor was expected. It was not a question of advance of wages with the Chartists; it was rather a demand for the Charter; and it was thought a general stoppage of work would compel the Government to concede it. But the agitation was rendered innocuous by the attitude of the masters. The Chartist leaders had represented to the operatives that they must carry the day, in consequence of the universality of the movement. Many of the employers, however, had no objection to allow their mills to stand idle, when their standing still was about as profitable as working. Sir Benjamin Heywood issued an address to the working men of Manchester, demonstrating the folly and short-sightedness of the movement.

The agitation extended of course to Rochdale, amongst other towns. Factory workers were ordered to leave the mills, the establishment of Messrs. Bright being amongst the number where a turn-out was demanded by the Chartists. The manufacturers of the town resisted the demands made upon them, and after one of the meetings on Cronkeyshaw Common, Mr. Bright addressed a large number of persons near Greenbank Mill. He said it was a great mistake to resort to violence by plug-drawing (emptying the boilers, and so stopping the mills), and that violence would not serve any good cause; that the strike was a mistake if it was undertaken for a political object, and he hoped they would keep the peace while the struggle lasted. For his own firm, he could say that they were prepared to open their mill any day when the workpeople were ready to return to their work. Mr. Bright also issued an address 'To the Working Men of Rochdale,' in which he brought forward co-

gent arguments against strikes. 'Many of you,' he said, 'know full well that neither Act of Parliament nor act of a multitude can keep up wages. You know that trade has long been bad, and with a bad trade wages cannot rise. If you are resolved to compel an advance of wages, you cannot compel manufacturers to give you employment. Trade must yield a profit, or it will not long be carried on; and an advance of wages now would destroy profit.' Replying to those leaders who recommended the workpeople to give up the question of wages, and stand upon the Charter, the writer observed: 'The working classes can never gain it of themselves. Physical force you wisely repudiate. It is immoral, and you have no arms, and little organization. Moral force can only succeed through the electors, and these are not yet convinced. The principles of the Charter will one day be established; but years *may* pass over, months *must* pass over, before that day arrives. You cannot stand idle till it comes. Your only means of living are from the produce of your own labour. Unhappily, you have wives and children, and all of you have the cravings of hunger; and you must live, and in order to live you must work.' Having shown that the Chartist leaders were deceiving the masses, as they knew that their objects were not attainable in the way they indicated, Mr. Bright continued: 'If every employer and workman in the kingdom were to swear on his bended knees that wages should not fall, they would assuredly fall if the Corn Law continues. No power on earth can maintain your wages at their present rate if the Corn Law be not repealed. You may doubt this now, but consider the past I beseech you; what the past tells you the future will confirm. You may not thank me for thus addressing you, but nevertheless I am your friend. Your own class does not include a man more sincerely anxious than I am to obtain for you both industrial and political freedom. You have found me on all occasions, if a feeble, yet an honest and zealous defender; and I trust in this, time will work no change in me. My heart sympathizes deeply in your sufferings. I believe I know whence they mainly spring, and would gladly relieve them. I would willingly become poor, if that would make you comfortable and happy. To such of you as have been employed at the mills with which I am connected, I may add that as soon as you are disposed to resume your work, the doors shall be opened to you. I invite you to come, and you shall be treated as, I trust, you have ever been—as I would ever wish you to treat me.' The address was not without its effect, and Mr. Bright's counsel was speedily followed. Although tumults

arose in some districts, the Chartist agitation subsided without those fearful consequences which in the outset were anticipated.

As the result of a tour which Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden made on behalf of the League through the Midlands, they raised in subscriptions about £3,000 towards the £50,000 which was asked as a special fund for the purposes of the Association. Speaking subsequently at a meeting in Manchester, Mr. Bright said that he had felt humiliated by the manner in which he and his friends had been treated at every meeting they had addressed; persons who came from the Anti-Corn-Law League were looked upon as the very deliverers of the commerce of the country from the shackles in which it had been so long enthralled. 'The time is now come when we must no longer regard this infamous law as a mistake on the part of the aristocracy and the landowners—it was no mistake of the landowners, no accident; chance had nothing to do with it; it was a crime of the deepest dye against the rights and industry, and against the well-being of the British people; and

> "Not all that heralds rake from coffin'd clay,
> Nor florid prose nor honied lines of rhyme,
> Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime!"'

Mr. Bright was indefatigable in the cause of the League, attending and addressing meetings about this time at Sheffield, Huddersfield, Coventry, Liverpool, Bradford, Halifax, Woodside, Kendal, Carlisle, Newcastle-on-Tyne, South Shields, Rochdale, Sunderland, and Darlington. In all these large towns, and in other districts also, the principles of the League made rapid and striking progress.

On the 29th of December Mr. Bright spoke at a large meeting in the Corn Exchange, Manchester, and his address on that occasion seems to have aroused the audience to an unwonted pitch of enthusiasm. We have already quoted an extract from this speech, but it demands further notice. The speaker gave first an account of the meetings which had been attended by deputations from the League, showing the extraordinary feeling which the movement had evoked in the minds of the population. The other towns looked up to Manchester as the metropolis of the empire at that moment. They were not looking to London to lead them on this question; they believed that in Manchester was the centre and heart of the great demonstration being made throughout the country in condemnation of the iniquitous Corn Laws. Mr. Bright went on to refer to the retaliating tariffs of other nations, the distress inflicted upon

the population of our own land by the diminution of trade, the constant struggle for daily bread, and the consequent competition in the labour market diminishing wages, the wretched culture of land under protection, the exemption of landowners from their fair share of taxation, the miserable condition of the protected farmers and farm labourers, the insecurity of property in the agricultural districts; and he claimed for the League the merit of being the best friend to the farmers, and to the community generally, that they had ever known. Mr. Bright cautioned his hearers against allowing the struggle to be made a mere plaything between the two political parties, and after observing that the League was feared and hated by those upon whom rested the guilt of the Corn Laws, he remarked, in conclusion, 'To the landed aristocracy, to the monopolist and bankrupt portion of them, we say, We do not ask you to repeal the Corn Law, and to loose your grasp from the subsistence of this most industrious and meritorious, and yet most injured population,—we do not ask it from your sense of justice and from your love of right, for had you possessed either the one or the other this infamous law would never have been enacted,—but we appeal to what is more honest and more virtuous, we appeal to the millions of our countrymen who are awakening to the wrongs they have so long and so patiently endured, and to the consciousness that it is you who have inflicted them,—we appeal to the honesty and intelligence of the middle classes of this empire, in the full confidence that the hour is at hand when their united voices shall be heard above the roar of party, and shall decree the immediate and the utter and everlasting extinction of this odious and inhuman and most unnatural law.'

One who was present at this meeting, and witnessed the fervour caused by Mr. Bright's speech, uttered the following prediction with regard to the most eloquent defender of the League: 'Though it is asserted that the League will dissolve, and its public men retire to private business or private life, when its purposes are accomplished—though the League may dissolve and its men seek retirement, and though the Friends should continue as unassuming as they have ever been, Mr. John Bright will, if he lives long enough, be a leading man in the British Legislature. I am not aware that he ever whispered the probability of his becoming a member, to say nothing of a leader, but talents like his will take root too firmly in the public mind, long before the Corn Law repeal is accomplished, to admit of his retirement, even were he desirous of repose.' The

Free Trade advocate had already made it apparent that his eloquence was far from being circumscribed, and his sympathies far from being narrowed and exhausted, by the cause of the League—admirable though that cause might be.

As the League was now too great a fact to be ignored, its members were exhorted by the timid and the hesitating to wait and see what Peel would do. But the Council took a different view of the matter, and issued an address, signed by the chairman, Mr. George Wilson, to the people of England. The Common Council of London had emphatically and almost unanimously denounced the Corn Laws, and the metropolis was now appealed to, to place itself at the head of the movement.

Such men as Mr. Fox Maule, with the prospect or the actual possession of a large stake in the country as landowners—now declared themselves in favour of total and unconditional repeal. Mr. Bright referred to this at one of the League meetings, and in describing a tour he had made in Scotland, said that at Edinburgh no fewer than twenty-nine ministers of religion were upon the platform. They had taken up the question in the conscientious belief that it was one nearly allied to the duties of the office which they had assumed. The mother of Mr. Drummond, —under-secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and a gentleman who would be long remembered on account of one single sentence that he had addressed to the Irish landowners, viz., 'Property has its duties as well as its rights,'—sent a subscription to the League, thus showing that she coincided in the view that her son had expressed. At various towns in Scotland landed proprietors came forward to express their sympathy with the movement.

The Manchester Free Trade Hall—one of the most famous buildings in the country, and, with the exception of Westminster Hall, the largest in the kingdom—was opened on the 30th of January, 1843. At the commencement of the proceedings, Mr. George Wilson read a list of contributions to the £50,000 fund, amounting to £40,600, of which sum Manchester subscribed £7,000, Glasgow £2,500, Liverpool £2,200, and Rochdale £2,200. The remaining portion of the fund was speedily forthcoming, although the promoters of the scheme had been laughed at as foolishly sanguine for asking such a sum as £50,000. A series of meetings were hold in the new hall, Mr. Bright being amongst the speakers at several of the gatherings.

Early in 1843, a singular misunderstanding occurred between Lord Brougham and the Repealers, which resulted in a

correspondence between his lordship and Mr. Bright. The clever but irascible peer demanded from Mr. Bright a disclaimer of what he described as an 'atrocious falsehood' published in the *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* (as the organ of the League was now called), to the effect that he had importuned a League deputation to entrust him with a motion in the House of Lords on the subject of the Corn Laws. Mr. Bright, in his reply, defended the League generally; but the anger of Lord Brougham was not in any degree mitigated. The article which had so greatly irritated him was not from the pen of Mr. Bright.

In the month of February, the House of Commons was invited to discuss the question of Free Trade on a side issue. Lord Howick moved for a committee to inquire into the distress of the country, and during the lengthy debate which ensued Mr. Gladstone made the significant admission that if a change in the Corn Law were to take place, and if that change were to procure an increased importation of foreign corn, and if that importation of foreign corn were to be paid for in British manufactures, he thought it would be taking a most short and false view of the interests of British agriculture to view that importation of foreign corn as so much displacement of British agricultural commerce. The first effect would be that it might reduce prices, but undoubtedly it would give a demand for the labour of those now unemployed, and thereby create a new class of producers, and raise the wages of those who had now low wages, thus enabling them to consume more largely. Mr. Disraeli, as a sanguine Protectionist, thought that if time were given for the operation of natural causes, trade would certainly revive! He made no allowance for the other hypothesis that by the operation of these same natural causes harvests might be blighted, trade destroyed, and the people starved.

On the fifth night of the debate a strange scene occurred. After the speech of Mr. Cobden, which was an unanswerable argument in favour of repeal, Sir Robert Peel rose, and in his excitement indirectly insinuated that Mr. Cobden was inclined to favour assassination against him. Here is an account of this brief but painful episode:—

Sir Robert Peel. 'Sir, the hon. gentleman has stated here very emphatically, what he has more than once stated at the Conference of the Anti-Corn-Law League, that he holds me individually (these words, which were pronounced with much solemnity of manner, were followed by a loud cheer from the Ministerial benches, of a very peculiar and emphatic kind. It lasted a considerable time, and while it continued, and for some time afterwards, the House presented an appearance of extreme excitement, the members in the

galleries standing up, and many of those below speaking eagerly to each other)—individually responsible for the distress and suffering of the country; that he holds me personally responsible. (Renewed cheering of the same character.) Be the consequences of those insinuations what they may—(cheering renewed with great vehemence)—never will I be influenced by menaces (continued cheering) to adopt a course which I consider——(the rest of the sentence was lost in renewed shouts from the Ministerial benches).'

Mr. Cobden. 'I did not say that I held the right hon. gentleman personally responsible. (Shouts from the Ministerial benches of "Yes, yes; you did, you did," mingled with cries of "order" and "chair.") I have said that I hold the right hon. gentleman responsible by virtue of his office—(renewed shouts from the same quarter, cries of "No, no," and confusion)—as the whole context of what I said was sufficient to explain. (Renewed cries of "No, no," from the Ministerial benches.)'

It was generally admitted that for this unhappy incident Sir Robert Peel was wholly responsible. In mitigation, however, it must be added that the Premier was suffering from highly-overwrought and nervous feelings, in consequence of the attempt at his assassination, which had resulted in the death of his secretary, Mr. Drummond. Indeed, Sir Robert admitted shortly afterwards that he was not certain Mr. Cobden used the word personally. He ought therefore to have frankly accepted the emphatic disclaimer twice repeated by the latter. The result of the debate was that Lord Howick's motion was rejected by 306 to 191 votes.

Peel was credited in some quarters, notwithstanding his continued opposition to repeal, with a desire to settle the question, if he could see his way to it. Meanwhile, the Conservatives were being urged to repeal in various directions. Carlyle, in his *Past and Present*, begged them to hasten, for the sake of Conservatism itself, to probe Protection vigorously, and to cast it forth at once and for ever if guilty. 'If I were the Conservative party of England,' he said, 'I would not for a hundred thousand pounds an hour allow those Corn Laws to continue. Potosi and Golconda put together would not purchase my assent to them. Do you count what treasuries of bitter indignation they are laying up for you in every just English heart? Do you know what questions, not as to corn prices and sliding scales alone, they are *forcing* every reflective Englishman to ask himself? Questions insoluble, or hitherto unsolved; deeper than any of our logic-plummets hitherto will sound: questions deep enough, which it were better we did not name, even in thought! You are forcing us to think of them, to begin uttering them. The utterance is begun; and where will it be ended, think you? When now millions of one's brother-men sit in workhouses, and five millions, as is insolent-

ly said, "rejoice in potatoes," there are various things that must be begun, let them end where they can.'

At the first metropolitan League meeting held after the melancholy scene in the House of Commons, Mr. Cobden was received with rapturous cheers, which lasted several minutes, as a protest against the endeavour to fix a stigma upon his name. The hon. member himself expressed his astonishment that he, a member of the Peace Society before he was a politician, and who conscientiously believed that it was worse than useless to take human life even for murder, should be accused of instigating to assassination. Mr. Cobden was followed by Mr. Bright, who claimed for the League the credit of having preserved the peace in an alarming state of affairs in the previous year, and said that to such outbreaks the country would always be liable so long as the Corn Laws existed; but that if they were repealed, there would not need to be maintained a soldier in Lancashire or in Yorkshire.

A great meeting was also held on the 23rd of February, in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester—upwards of five thousand persons being present—'to repudiate the charges made in the Legislature against the League, and more particularly against Richard Cobden, Esq., M.P.' The word 'charges' had reference both to the Peel episode in the Commons and Lord Brougham's invectives in the Lords. Mr. George Wilson warmly defended the League, and Mr. Absalom Watkin said that they who made the charge did not believe it; but it should be repelled, in order that silence might not be mistaken for acquiescence, and the usefulness of the League be impeded by the infamous calumny. At the same time he thought they should assert fully and clearly the constitutional doctrine of the 'individual and personal responsibility' of every Minister of the Crown. This responsibility had never been doubted by any writer on the law of England. Resolutions were passed expressing the highest esteem for Mr. Cobden, and an address was also adopted to him from the inhabitants of Manchester and Salford. Amongst the speakers were Messrs. Henry Ashworth, T. Bazley, Sir T. Potter, John Bright, and Ald. Callender.

After some preliminary observations, Mr. Bright, who spoke with much warmth and energy, said: 'Every man must deplore the fact that the Prime Minister of this country should have degraded himself by such an exhibition as that which he made in the House of Commons last week. I rejoice that we have so speedily again an opportunity of meeting in this Hall, to de-

nounce the law which the Prime Minister acknowledges to be unjust, and which he knows full well must soon be repealed. Look at the miserable tactics of our opponents from the beginning. We are not at the climax of the game they have been playing. They treated us at first with ridicule. Afterwards they pretended to meet us with a little argument; and that failed, as it was likely to fail. Then they hinted at the suppression of the League as an illegal association; but though there are laws in this country with meshes so small that it might be possible we should not be able to get through them, yet these laws are laws which no Minister dare enforce, unless he have the sanction of the great body of the intelligent population of this country; and I dare assert that on this question the intelligence of the country, and of the middle classes in particular, is in direct antagonism to the Ministry of the day. This project, then, of suppressing the League as an illegal association did not do, and slander was next resorted to.'

Mr. Bright then severely animadverted on the attempt of Lord Brougham and Mr. Roebuck to crush the League through its most distinguished advocate in the House of Commons, declaring that never was an attempt more vain.

> 'Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;
> And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
> Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.'

He had experienced sensations of the deepest humiliation when he had witnessed the Protectionists in the House of Commons all conscience-stricken. But what was to be said of the leader of this band of men, who, holding Free-trade opinions, yet shrank from the just responsibility which had been laid upon him? When asked to enforce his opinions, the answer was, 'It is not the time.' 'I ask, when will it be the time? We thought it was time five years ago. I tell you that it is a hypocritical defence to say that this is not the time. It is now the time; the hour is now striking. It is absolutely necessary that this law should be repealed, in order to restore prosperity, and avert from you calamities which I cannot contemplate without horror. I tell you, men of Manchester, that it is from you must come the deliverance of your country. You have the power to say to this monstrous, this hideous monopoly, "Go back to the den from whence all such hideous things have come, and let honest men enjoy the life that God has given them." I got up for the purpose of proposing that we should present an address to Richard Cobden.'

At the mention of Mr. Cobden's name, the whole meeting burst into a tremendous round of cheering, with waving of hats and handkerchiefs, in which the ladies joined heartily, the demonstration lasting for several minutes. The speaker continued: 'They say that the people are proverbially ungrateful. It is a gross calumny upon them. I do not stand up to flatter the member for Stockport. I believe him to be a very intelligent and very honest man. I believe that he will act with a single eye to the good of his country. I cannot suppose that the triumph of the great principles of which he is so distinguished an advocate is far distant, and when that is accomplished we shall be amply repaid by the marvellous change which in a few years will take place in the moral aspect of this country.'

The League now decided to hold a series of meetings in Drury Lane Theatre. The first of these demonstrations took place on the 15th of March, 1843, when pit, boxes, and gallery were all alike densely crowded. Mr. George Wilson presided, and Mr. Cobden made one of his most forcible speeches. The question was, he said, whether the feudal system in this country was to flourish beside an advancing and progressive manufacturing and commercial community. There were manufacturing and commercial communities in other countries, where feudalism did not exist. They would exist here by the side of feudalism, if feudalism would allow them; but if not by the side of feudalism, feudalism would not be permitted to stop the progress of civilisation; if not by the side of it, then the manufacturing and commercial interests would flourish upon the ruins of feudalism.

Mr. Bright—described as 'of Rochdale' for the last time—followed Mr. Cobden. He spoke with great power and effect. Describing first the pauperized condition of the country, and earnestly warning that great audience that London could not long remain exempt from the general wretchedness, he thus proceeded:—

'There was no institution of this country—the monarchy, the aristocracy, the Church, or any other whatever—of which he would not say, "Attach it to the Corn Law, and I will predict its fate." In this country everything which we held dear was contained. In countries not far off they had seen institutions shaken to their foundation by dire calamities. They had seen crowns and hierarchies shaken to the dust; they had seen ranks, and orders, and parties overthrown: but there was one party which survived all this, and that party was the people. Whatever convulsion might happen in this country, whatever orders might be overthrown, the people would survive. . . . . The people of London were the centre of a great empire, the fate of which was trembling in the balance, and which had long been struggling even to

faintness with this great iniquity. The provinces, without which they could not exist, and from which they drew all their wealth, all their sustenance, had done that which was the duty of the people of London. He spoke in the name of the numerous meetings which he had attended throughout the country, and he called on them to raise their voices to the Legislature, and to co-operate with those meetings until that blessed and happy day should arrive when this monopoly should be overthrown, and the blessings which God had provided for the whole of His people, should be enjoyed by all.'

One of the finest orators of the League at this time was Mr. W. J. Fox, who fairly divided the honours of popularity with Cobden and Bright. His speeches had an electrical effect, and Mr. Prentice recalls one extraordinary scene in particular, when he called upon his hearers to bind themselves in a solemn league never to cease their labours till the Corn Laws were destroyed—thousands starting to their feet, with arms extended, as if ready to swear extinction to monopoly. Mr. Bright himself, we have reason for stating, regarded the oratory of Mr. Fox as more powerful and striking than that of any other League speaker.

The Drury Lane meetings were continued with unflagging spirit and energy; and by way of further extending its influence, the League now ceased the publication of its small fortnightly *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular*, and established the *League* weekly newspaper in its stead.

During the year 1843 the League carried their agitation into the agricultural districts. A deputation consisting of Mr. Ashworth, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Cobden, visited some of the most highly cultivated parts of Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, and East Lothian, for the purpose of procuring trustworthy information on the position of agriculture and the views of the farmers. The mission occupied several weeks, and Mr. Ashworth has remarked that the sequence of the initials of the three members of the deputation led to the joke that the 'A B C' of the League had gone to study farming. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden subsequently went to the south of England, and addressed meetings respectively at Taunton, Liskeard, Dorchester, Uxbridge, Bedford, Rye, Huntingdon, Colchester, Chelmsford, Lewes, Salisbury, Canterbury, Oxford, etc At Dorchester, Mr. Bright put the question of the operation of the Corn Law into a nutshell. 'The Corn Law, by preventing imports of corn, and thereby unduly raising the prices during seasons of deficient harvests, takes from the people so much of their earnings as leave them without the means of keeping up their usual consumption of such articles of clothing, furniture, etc., as they require, and by the making of which

millions of people are profitably employed, and paid, and earn a livelihood; and thus, when the general demand for these articles falls off, and men are without employment, distress is brought upon large masses of the people. The home trade, or demand for home products, is thus greatly injured; and whilst this process is going on, the Corn Law is also preventing the extension of the foreign trade, by raising up high duties abroad, and by diminishing the home consumption of foreign commodities, and thus diminishing the amount of exports required to pay for those commodities. But however injurious the Corn Law has been to manufacturers, it has been more destructive of the well-being of the tenant farmers. If it has injured and impoverished the farmers' customers, it must have injured the farmers.' Again, 'The Corn Law renders the farmers wholly dependent upon their landlords. They can scarcely think or act for themselves. They are cajoled or bullied into voting for the landlord's candidate, who as a legislator maintains the Corn Law by which trade is destroyed, and farming made a hazardous and unprofitable business.'

Mr. Cobden, at a county meeting at Bedford, waged a verbal contest for six hours with the farmers, and in the end his arguments prevailed, a resolution in favour of Free-trade principles being carried by two to one. Farmers generally, in fact, now began to have their faith completely shaken by Mr. Cobden's proof that no Corn Law could ever guarantee them even 36*s.* a quarter, and they were already asking, 'What is the use of a Corn Law, if tenants are to get Dantzic prices, and to pay English rents?'

Speaking at Huntingdon, Mr. Bright maintained that the Corn Law was most prejudicial to the interests of the country, and that whether it raised rents or not, it was essentially a rent law, and nothing else. 'There is not a man present,' he said, 'who can place his hand upon his heart and say he does not believe that the farmers have been tricked by political jugglery. The men whom you elect derive more advantage from the present Ministry being in power than anything they can gain from the Corn Law. This Government has hundreds, if not thousands, of offices at its disposal, there being no less than five hundred appointments in India alone; and with the political landlord it becomes very much like Tom Moore's description of the Whigs on one occasion—and the same would equally apply to the Tories:

> "As bees on flowers alighting cease their hum,
> So, settling upon places, Whigs grow dumb."

I conclude by telling you that the Anti-Corn-Law League, which you have been taught to consider your enemy, is a body of individuals composed of all classes, united in one strong desire that every portion of the people should prosper. I have a business as large as any man in this assembly, and with as much property at stake in it, and I am so convinced of the evil of this law—not to me only, but to you—that if trade were prosperous, which it is not, I would still come among you and tell you that the Corn Law is a curse to agriculture even more blasting than it has ever been to manufactures.' At Salisbury Mr. Bright spoke with special force and eloquence, and, referring to the evil effects of the Corn Law upon the tenant farmers as compared with its effects upon the manufacturers, said, 'If it has scourged us with thongs, it has lashed you with scorpions. It has made your trade fluctuating and hazardous, it has deprived you of political independence, it has surrounded you with discontented and impoverished labourers, it has raised your poor-rates; and by making you compete with each other for farms, it has raised your rents; and all this has been done under cover of professing to protect you. We come among you to ask your assistance in the great struggle we are engaged in, a struggle which will be crowned with complete and early success, a success which will deliver you and our country from the most destructive and disgraceful imposition which any Government ever practised upon any people.'

Mr. Bright also made a tour in the north, from Kelso to Alnwick and Newcastle. The delegates excited hostility in some quarters, but it was reserved for a journal in the last-named town to reach the climax of unscrupulous opposition, by suggesting that Mr. Bright should be violently dealt with. The 'stalwart yeoman,' however, who was called upon to curse Mr. Bright, and to lay hands upon him, ended by blessing the delegate, who had convinced him by his arguments of the soundness of Free-trade principles.

In the House of Commons, Mr. Villiers brought on as usual this session his motion for the abolition of the Corn Laws. Peel defended the laws, though more in an apologetic than a positive fashion. After the Premier's speech, Mr. Milner Gibson moved the adjournment of the debate, whereupon a disgraceful scene ensued, in which the Protectionists were the chief actors. The House resembled a menagerie; there was cock-crowing in its highest perfection, the bleat of the calf, the bray of the ass, the hiss of the goose, together with divers supplemental sounds,

which Mr. Cobden, with strict and impartial justice, described as the most extraordinary and inhuman noises he had ever heard. The two party leaders, Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell, left the House, and the belligerents became fiercer and wilder than ever. The Speaker's voice was a mere whisper in the Babel of sounds. It was not until they were quite worn out by their exertions that the majority yielded to the adjournment of the debate. On the fifth night Mr. Cobden spoke very effectively, exposing the fallacies of the Protectionists, and showing the evils of the existing law; but Mr. Villiers's motion was lost by 381 to 125. In the minority, however, were several prominent and ex-official Whigs, including Lord Howick, Mr. Charles Buller, Mr. Ellice, Sir George Grey, Mr. Fox Maule, and Mr. Macaulay.

In the course of some two months after this debate, Mr. Bright was elected member for Durham under circumstances detailed in a previous chapter.

The Council of the League, towards the close of 1843, issued an address to the people of the United Kingdom, giving an account of the work that had been done during the year. From this it appeared that there were employed in the printing and making up of the electoral packets of tracts upwards of three hundred persons, while more than five hundred others were engaged in distributing them from house to house in the constituencies. Amongst the parliamentary electors alone of England and Scotland there had been distributed five millions of tracts and stamped publications. Besides these, there was a general distribution among the working classes, and others who were not electors, to the number of 3,600,000. Altogether, the number of tracts, stamped publications, etc., issued by the Council during the year amounted to 9,026,000, or in weight upwards of one hundred tons. Fourteen lecturers, employed in England, Wales, and Scotland, had delivered about 650 lectures during the year.

A vacancy having arisen in the representation of London through the death of Sir Matthew Wood, the Free Traders brought forward a candidate in the person of Mr. Pattison, who was opposed by Mr. T. Baring, as the representative of the Conservatives and the monopolists. The election excited great interest, the League most warmly supporting its candidate, and regarding the contest as one between opposing sets of principles. Mr. Bright described the plain and simple test as the complete, total, and immediate abolition of the monopoly of food. 'In this vast metropolis,' he said, 'where there are nearly two mil-

lions of inhabitants, probably not less a sum than six or eight millions sterling is wrung from your resources in different ways, not going into the pockets of the landlords, but being lost by the way, a great portion of it in order that their extortion may keep up a veil on its horrid countenance, and have something of the show of legitimate taxation, instead of being apparent and downright plunder. There will, in a very short period, be an opportunity for you to show decidedly that the principle of Free Trade is consecrated in your hearts and guides your votes.' The Free Trade candidate triumphed, the numbers at the close of the poll being, Pattison, 6,535; Baring, 6,334.

It was determined now to raise a fund of £100,000 to further the objects of the League. At a meeting in Manchester there was subscribed towards this sum £12,500, many firms contributing £500 each. The *Times* alarmed the monopolists by the admissions it made in a leading article published on November 18. 'The League is a great fact,' it observed. 'It would be foolish—nay, rash—to deny its importance. It is a great fact that there should have been created in the homesteads of our manufacturers a confederacy devoted to the agitation of one political question, persevering at it year after year, shrinking from no trouble, dismayed by no danger, making light of every obstacle.' After mentioning other facts, the article continued: 'No moralist can disregard them; no politician can sneer at them; no statesman can undervalue them. He who collects opinions must chronicle them; he who frames laws must to some extent consult them.' The aspect of things had certainly changed when the *Times* could confess that a new power had arisen in the State—changed, that is, in the eyes of those who based their opinions upon the information and guidance furnished by the daily press.

On the 1st of January, 1844, the Marquis of Westminster gave in his adhesion to the movement. Writing to Mr. G. Wilson, he said, 'I have much pleasure in sending a contribution of £500 to your fund, and I venture to express a hope that you will not relax your endeavours until you have obtained from Government, in whatever hands it may happen to be, the fullest measure of Free Trade compatible with what is due to the maintenance of public credit.' The organization now numbered amongst its supporters, as Mr. Prentice remarks, the wealthiest individual of the monied interest, Mr. Jones Loyd; the wealthiest of the manufacturers, Mr. Marshall, of Leeds; and the wealthiest of noblemen, the Marquis of Westminster. The Earl of Carlisle (then Lord Morpeth) wished success to the

League, although he did not completely identify himself in detail with its principles. His lordship, however, attended a great West Riding demonstration, held at Wakefield, on behalf of the League. At the banquet Mr. Bright was called upon to propose 'The Abolition of the Sugar and all other Monopolies,' and in doing so he thus referred both to Lord Morpeth's attitude and the general question:—'I listened to his lordship's description of some portion of his journey on the American continent; to the glowing language in which he spoke of those vast prairies, which seemed as though countless ages had passed since the vast ocean flowed over them, and had by some omnipotent fiat been at once suspended and changed into the solid earth; and I heard his description of those great rivers which rise no one knows how, or where, and that are in future times to be highways from the ocean to the people who may inhabit their banks. I was pleased to hear all this; and when he spoke of the surplus produce of those vast countries, and of the want there is in this country, I confess I did feel disappointed that any bar should be proposed or permitted to be put which should in any degree narrow the market and the circle out of which we might obtain a supply for the hungry people of this country. A small fixed duty might not be insurmountable by the corn-growers of the nearest country; but to America, distant three thousand miles, and to those vast prairies, distant five thousand miles, a fixed duty of very small amount would operate generally as an insurmountable barrier to a constant trade in corn between this country and that. I will not enter more into this part of the question. The League has put its hand to the plough, and it will not turn back.'

Twice during the session of 1844 the Corn Law question was raised in the House of Commons. On the 12th of March, Mr. Cobden moved for a committee to inquire into the effects of protective duties on agricultural tenants and labourers. The hon. member supported his demand by facts and statistics bearing upon the condition of the population. Mr. Gladstone opposed the motion, on the grounds that such a committee would cause apprehension, and that it could not usefully deal with the subjects opened up by the mover. Mr. Bright spoke in favour of the motion. Though the persons who thought with Mr. Cobden and himself, he remarked, might be few in that House, they were many and influential in the country. He and his party had been charged with exciting the people. He did not deny it; they had excited the people, and should continue to do so. No evil had ever found redress until agitation had compelled

it. The Corn Law, ever since 1815, had been a fraud upon the tenants, for they had been led to believe that the effect of it would be to maintain an average price of 80*s.* per quarter. Indeed, every prophecy of the agricultural soothsayers had failed of fulfilment. The Protectionists had made many misrepresentations, either from ignorance or from some worse cause. He besought the House to take into immediate consideration the distress of the agricultural labourers, which he believed to extend throughout the southern counties of England, and over Wales and Scotland. He dwelt particularly on the evils prevalent in Dorsetshire, the state of which county was, in his opinion, a clear proof of the inefficiency of the Corn Law to produce agricultural prosperity. The increase of population would in a few years force the repeal of that law, unless the Legislature had the wisdom to repeal it earlier.

Mr. Bright made a strong point when he told the House that if the majority thought the justice of the Corn Law could be proved, they would grant the committee at once. There was only one way, he said in conclusion, by which this question could be carried, and that was by making it thoroughly known to the country. 'When they exposed the bad principles of this law, they exposed also the most unwise policy of the agricultural members of that House; and passing from county to county, and town to town, the constituents of this empire should know that the landowners sat in that House, if not with an express desire and design, yet they did sit there, resisting any attempt, however small, to affect the price of the produce of land, with determined opposition, and maintaining a law the object of which was to prevent a reduction of rent; and when millions throughout the country asked for an inquiry into the subject, they did not hesitate to vote as if they were a corporation sitting there to support their own interests, and keep up the rent of land.'

Mr. Cobden's motion was lost by 224 votes to 133. On the 25th of June, Mr. Villiers brought forward his annual motion by a series of resolutions, which Mr. Gladstone said the Government would meet with a direct negative. Mr. Bright, in supporting the motion, said: 'I am convinced that, whatever may be the feelings of confidence now entertained by the right hon. baronet (Sir R. Peel), whenever bad harvests again occur, he will either abolish this law, or his Government will be overthrown, as was the Government he succeeded by the bad harvests we have lately suffered from. I do not wish this law to be repealed in times of excitement, nor do I wish its destruction

to be achieved as a great party victory; I would rather it were for ever abolished by the unanimous verdict of the honest and intelligent classes of the country. We should regard it as a question of great national interest, not as one affecting our own profits or property; we should legislate upon it in such a manner that, laying our hands upon our hearts, we may say that we have dealt with it upon great and just principles, with an honest regard to the common good, and not merely with regard to the claims of a particular interest.' Although Mr. Villiers's proposition was lost by 328 to 124, in less than two years from its utterance the Premier fulfilled Mr. Bright's prediction.

The League having been unable to make arrangements for the continuance of their weekly meetings in Drury Lane Theatre, now hired the theatre in Covent Garden for that purpose. In the latter house, many enthusiastic assemblies gathered to listen to the stirring oratory of Mr. Cobden, Mr. Fox, Mr. Bright, and other leaders in the movement. At one of these meetings Mr. Cobden announced that it was not the intention of the League to recommend any futher petitioning to the existing House of Commons. The audience rose and enthusiastically applauded this announcement, as well as the further statement by the speaker to the effect that when such a point had been reached as would justify the step, the Council would recommend the electors to memorialise the Queen in favour of the immediate dissolution of Parliament.

Mr. Bright, in a long address, said that while viewing that great meeting as a pleasant proof of the progress of the cause, it was nevertheless somewhat humiliating to think that an assembly of four or five thousand people should be required to be called together at this time of day to protest against a law so evidently bad and unjust as the Corn Law, and to assert a right so clear and evident as that which they wished to gain for the people—perfect freedom for their industry. They asserted this principle—that every man had a right to the fruits of his own industry, and a right to exchange it with any other man; a right to dispose of it wherever he could get most for it. Mr. Bright next dealt with the argument of the *Standard* that there was a great improvement in trade, and therefore that repeal was not called for. Admitting this temporary improvement, he asked, 'Would not bad harvests return again? Had there been any revelation from heaven saying that in future the earth should always yield abundantly? Would not the return of bad harvests bring with it the return of all the calamities from which he trusted some portion of the people were now

escaping? And if they had suffered so much for five years past—if honourable men had become bankrupts from no fault of their own, and if multitudes of honest, industrious, and meritorious artisans had been driven into the degradation of pauperism, and not a few into crime, through the pressure of these Corn and Provision Laws,—if that was so, was it to be thought that they who had put their hands to the plough would now turn back from the work? Lancashire at present enjoyed a little sunshine, but the prospects in Ireland were very unpleasant for the monopolists. After referring to the miserable condition of the farmers in England, the speaker continued: 'The monopolist landowners tried to keep their tenantry away from meetings where they might hear the Corn Law discussed. And why? For the same reason that they tried to shut up Drury Lane Theatre. They did not wish to have the matter touched; they felt that it would not bear handling, that it would not bear to be examined. They knew that the pretences on which the Corn and Provision Laws were maintained were unfounded and dishonest. They wished their tenants, therefore, not to hear the matter discussed; but they were greatly deceived if they flattered themselves that the farmers would not make amends for their exclusion from hearing by reading, for the report of this meeting would be sent to nearly every occupying farmer in some one or more of the counties of England.'

Yet there were not wanting members of the aristocracy who had considerable sympathy with the League. Some of them were not only Corn Law repealers, but Free-traders in the widest sense of the word. The members of the League wanted to have this question settled for the world as well as for England. 'They were tired of what were called the natural divisions of empires. They wanted not that the Channel should separate this country from France; they hoped and wished that Frenchmen and Englishmen should no longer consider each other as naturally hostile nations. It was common to speak of rivers, and mountains, and seas as the natural divisions of countries, separating one nation from another, from all time and for all time; but there was no barrier which nature had reared which was a thousandth part so detrimental to the interests of mankind, or so much calculated to embitter their feelings and promote hostilities, as were those miserable unnatural barriers which legal restrictions on trade had imposed, and which were upheld by lines of custom-houses between nation and nation.'

Mr. Bright said it was terrible to think that the Queen of the United Kingdom should be wielding a sceptre, not over twenty-seven millions of happy and independent people, but over three or four and twenty millions living as they best could, and over four millions of absolute paupers. The League, he said, would stand between these helpless beings and their oppressors; and he thus concluded: 'We have a perfect faith in the beauty, excellence, and perfection of the principles we promulgate; and we know heaven will prosper those who are working in a cause that shall bless the world; and we know that the promises of Omnipotence are to those who bless His creatures, and who bring happiness to their hearts and homes. We shall go onward, then; we shall have no slackening in our ranks because cotton is a little dearer than it was. We did not buckle on our armour for a sham contest. We ourselves were not hungering; I never had a meal the less, however many of my countrymen were suffering and my business has always yielded some profit. We have no other motive to action than the wish to do away with this cruel injustice. Our opponents know that they are unjust, and they now know that we know it; and we are resolved that the millions amongst whom we live shall no longer be trampled on by the iron hoof of monopoly. We have fought this battle with the confidence of success, and we know that success awaits us, for we remember in faith and gratitude that royal lips have declared by the inspiration of the Eternal Spirit that "the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."'

The harvest of 1844 having been better than usual, and the price of bread being comparatively low, there was a slight lull in the Free-trade agitation. But the League, knowing that it was fallacious to build hopes of a permanent improvement without repeal, now addressed themselves to another and a very important task—that of purging the electoral registers. For three or four months this task was pursued, and on the 24th of October a meeting was held in the Manchester Free Trade Hall to hear the result. Mr. George Wilson produced a detailed account of the great gains to the Free-trade party in the registration for every borough in Lancashire, and stated that in sixty-eight boroughs in other parts of the kingdom there had been similar gains. The registration list for the county of Lancaster had also been revised, with the result that it gave to the Leaguers a seat for South Lancashire, and a gain of 533 votes for North Lancashire, leaving the monopolists three seats in

the boroughs, or five out of the whole twenty-six members for the entire county. In the history of registration there had never been so complete a sweep of a county as that.

This new development of League policy naturally spread alarm amongst the monopolists, and this alarm was increased by a suggestion of Mr. Cobden that there was an opening for a great increase in the number of forty-shilling freeholds, thus enabling probably the repealers to gain many of the counties. It was felt that every county possessing a large town population might be won, if the people could be roused to a systematic effort to qualify themselves for the vote in the way in which the South Lancashire people had reached the qualification.

Mr. Bright was especially earnest upon the one point that it was a false security to believe that the comparative prosperity then enjoyed was likely to be permanent. Providence might give them one, two, or three more good harvests; but the course of the seasons could not be changed to suit the caprice, the folly, or the criminality of human legislation. The speaker added:—

'As we have had before, so shall we have again, a change of seasons: and when that change shall come, and if the people of this country have not, in the meantime, bestirred themselves and shaken off this iniquitous impost, I ask you, whom will you blame but yourselves, and where can you run for refuge? for your own folly will have led you into danger, and by your own neglect alone will you have allowed these evils again to come upon you. You will again have to suffer those evils which arise from the price of bread rising all over the country. The consumption by the great mass of the people of all kinds of manufactured goods will be greatly crippled; you will again have a great exportation of gold, and a great derangement of the monetary affairs of the country; you will again have numbers of merchants and manufacturers going rapidly, week after week, into the *Gazette;* you will again have your shopkeepers impoverished; and, worst of all, you will again have the labourers of this district, our honest and industrious artisans plunged into all that distress which we have lately witnessed; and, arising from that distress, discontent and disaffection, and a brutalizing and barbarizing of the minds of the people, such as they have suffered from for the last half a dozen years, and which they are now only partially getting rid of. It is impossible to draw a picture too gloomy of that which we have already seen in this district, and it is much less possible to draw a picture of that which must come if we neglect the power that we have in our hands to wipe away these infamous laws. I am sure we have the power; the statements made by our chairman to-night prove that we have the power. The Reform Act never has been worked by either the Liberal or Free-trade party in this country. It may be a bad bill; it has flaws enough, we all know; it has pitfalls many for us, and it has privileges far too many for our opponents. But for all that, if we will only work it, I am persuaded there is within it enough of the popular principle to enable us to amend it, if need be, and to do many other things which we may think necessary for our welfare.'

The registration and freehold movement received considerable impetus by a meeting held in Covent Garden Theatre on De-

cember 12th. Mr. Villiers spoke confidently, firmly persuaded that victory was not far distant; and Mr. Cobden was equally hopeful, changing Sir Robert Peel's well-known adjuration to 'Register' into 'Qualify, qualify, qualify!' Mr. Bright, who was even more eloquent than usual, said that his hope was brighter than ever—his faith undimmed by the smallest shadow of a doubt. In a great struggle, in the long run, the just always wins, and he must have read very little history who did not know that liberty was triumphing. Freedom, Heaven's first gift to man, was still living, breathing, growing, and every day increasing in strength. 'This freedom for which you struggle is the freedom to live; it is the right to eat your bread by the sweat of your brow. It is the freedom which was given to you even in the primeval curse; and shall man make that curse more bitter to his fellow-man? No; instead of despairing, I have more confidence and faith than ever. I believe that those old delusions and superstitions which, like venomous and polluted rags, have disfigured the fair form of this country's greatness, are now fast dropping away. I think I behold the dawn of a brighter day; all around are the elements of a mighty movement. We stand as on the very threshold of a new career; and may we not say that this League—this great and growing confederacy of those who love justice and hate oppression—has scattered, broadcast throughout the land, seed from which shall spring forth ere long an abundant, a glorious harvest of true greatness for our country, and of permanent happiness for mankind?'

Meetings, attended by deputations from the League, followed at Liverpool, Bradford, Sheffield, Wakefield, Bolton, Manchester, Warrington, Preston, Oldham, Blackburn, Durham, etc. Mr. Bright spoke at many of these meetings, and at all, the constitutional movement for the increase of the forty-shilling freeholders was warmly welcomed.

Before the meeting of Parliament in 1845, several large and influential free-trade meetings were held. At the first of these meetings, held in Covent Garden Theatre on the 15th of January, Mr. Milner Gibson said he agreed with the *Morning Post* that the only difference between the policy which Sir Robert Peel was prepared to pursue and the policy of the League was this—that Sir Robert's was a slow decay of gradual poverty saddened by disappointed hopes, while the policy of the League was prompt as the guillotine—but both were forms of extinction. Mr. Cobden said that he and his friends were anxious to guard themselves against this—that Sir Robert Peel should not

mix up the question of Free Trade with his dexterity in finance. Let it be understood that they would have nothing to do with mystification and shuffling. Theirs was a very simple and plain proposition. They said to the right hon. baronet, 'Abolish the monopolies which go to enrich that majority which placed you in power and keeps you there.' A satisfactory annual aggregate meeting of the Liverpool Anti-Monopoly Association was held a few days later. The objects of the meeting are sufficiently indicated by the title of the Association. On the 22d of January the annual aggregate meeting of the League was held in the Free-Trade Hall. The report stated that there was an undoubted gain upon the register in regard to 112 boroughs, and that in many of these the improvement was such as to ensure the return of free-traders in the place of monopolists, in the event of an election. The council had further reason to believe that within the past three months a sufficient number of persons had purchased freehold qualifications in North Cheshire, South Lancashire, and the West Riding of York, to secure to those important constituencies a free-trade majority; whilst a large addition had been made to the ranks of the repealers in Middlesex, North Lancashire, and several other populous counties. Besides this, the usual operations of the League had not been allowed to suffer, but had rather increased than otherwise. Of the fund of £100,000 proposed to be raised, upwards of £82,000 had already been received; and after all the expenses of the agitation had been met, there was still a balance in hand of £26,675.

On the following day, the first dinner of the Sussex Agricultural Protection Society took place at Brighton. The Duke of Richmond presided, and was supported by several members of both Houses of Parliament. The Earl of Egmont asked whether any man could read the speeches made by free-traders, and not believe that the whole foundation of their proceedings was revolution. He and his friends had now hoisted the flag of protection to agriculture, and they would bid defiance to the Anti-Corn-Law League. Mr. Stafford O'Brien predicted, as amongst the results of Free Trade, that whole districts would be thrown out of cultivation, and that estates would be brought to the hammer. The Duke of Richmond said that so long as he had blood in his veins he would stand up for the agricultural interests.

Parliament opened on the 4th of February, the Queen's speech alluding to the prospect of continued peace, and the general state of domestic prosperity and tranquillity. In the

debate on the Address in the Commons, Lord John Russell said he was convinced that protection was not the support but the bane of agriculture. He considered, both with respect to Ireland and the question of Free Trade, that the Government ought to take advantage of the present tranquil time. His lordship, in one point, took the same view as Mr. Bright, viz., that two or three bad harvests would cause such popular excitement as would force a change in spite of all resistance. Nor must it be forgotten that at this time Peel himself had already said that we ought to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; while Sir James Graham had declared that Free-trade principles were the principles of common sense.

Sir Robert Peel produced his Budget on the 14th of February. There was a surplus of £3,409,000, which he proposed to devote to the reduction of the sugar duty, the abolition of the duty on glass, cotton, wool, and on the importation of Baltic staves. It was also proposed to abolish the duty on all those articles which merely yielded nominal amounts, a step which would sweep away 430 articles from the tariff. Lord John's Russell's amendment on one of the Budget resolutions censuring the distinction between free-labour and slave-labour sugar as illusory, and detrimental to the revenue, was lost by a majority of 94; and Mr. Milner Gibson was also defeated in his resolution in favour of an equalization of duty on foreign and colonial sugar.

The Budget excited considerable opposition, for what the Minister gave with one hand he took away with the other. The proposals were discussed at an aggregate League meeting in Covent Garden Theatre, and those parts of the new ministerial measures which were founded on Free-trade principles were approved. Mr. Bright spoke at this meeting, sarcastically describing the farmers' friends in both Houses of Parliament. Then turning to their own organization, he said they had no alliance with lords or dukes. The prominent men of the League were men from the ranks. From their very beginning they placed no reliance but on the omnipotence of truth, and the intelligence and virtue of their countrymen. To them they had again and again appealed, and nobly had those appeals been responded to. In 1839 they first asked for subscriptions, and £5,000 was given. In 1840 between £7,000 and £8,000 was subscribed. In 1841 they held the great conference at Manchester, at which upwards of 700 ministers of religion attended. In 1842 they had their grand bazaar in Manchester, from which £10,000 was realized. In 1843 they asked for

£50,000, and got it. In 1844 they called for £100,000, and between £80,000 and £90,000 had been paid in, besides what would be received from the bazaar to be held in May. This year was young, but they had not been idle. There had been invested a sum of not less than £250,000 in the purchase of county qualifications. With regard to the bazaar, a great deal was being done, and a great deal more could and would be done before the time, in order to produce a display which he hoped would be so remarkable as to be worth a visit from the highest personage in the realm.

In the House of Commons, on the 7th of March, Mr. Cobden moved for a select committee to inquire into the causes and extent of the alleged existing agricultural distress, and into the effects of legislative protection upon the interests of landowners, tenant farmers, and farm labourers. Having adduced a mass of information and statistics in support of his demand, the hon. gentleman said, 'I have no hesitation in telling you, that if you give me a committee of this House, I will explode the delusion of agricultural protection. I will bring forward such a mass of evidence, and give you such a preponderance of talent and authority, that when the Blue Book is published and sent forth to the world, as we can now send it by our vehicles of information, your system of protection shall not live in public opinion for two years afterwards.' Was that old tattered flag of protection, he asked, tarnished and torn, to be kept hoisted still in the counties for the benefit of politicians, or would they come forward honestly and fairly to inquire into this system? He could not believe that the gentry of England would be made mere drumheads on this question, to be sounded upon by others. The country gentlemen could, if they pleased, have on the committee a majority of members of the Central Association.

Mr. Sidney Herbert, speaking for the Government, opposed the inquiry, saying that they could not countenance a committee which had no other object in view than to provide means for further agitation.

Mr. Bright supported the motion, speaking incisively against the Corn Laws, and contending that it was clear from their past history that all protection had been unavailing to keep up the price of corn. Turning upon those agricultural members who were subservient to the Government, he said he would ask them one question, 'Did they believe that the farmers would have voted for them at the last election if they had declared at the hustings they would support measures which would

bring down the price of corn from 61*s.* a quarter, which it was then, to 45*s.* a quarter, which it was now? And yet this they had done, in voting first for Sir Robert Peel's alterations in the Corn Laws, and afterwards for his alterations in the tariff. As protection had hitherto done them little, or rather no good, he recommended them to go into committee, and inquire whether it would not be for their advantage to abandon protection entirely.' Mr. Bright added that no one could deny that the tendency of the country was towards Free Trade.

But the country gentlemen believed only too implicitly that Mr. Cobden could explode protection, and so they voted against him. The motion was lost by 213 to 121, or a majority of 92.

On the 8th of May, the great Bazaar in connection with the League was opened in Covent Garden Theatre. It created, as Mr. Prentice says, an interest 'scarcely inferior to that which was felt at a later and happier period at the opening of the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park.' The London newspapers of all shades of opinion were filled with descriptions of the affair. The appearance of the building was very novel and striking. Instead of the horseshoe sweep of boxes with Grecian scrolls terminating at the massive pillars of the proscenium, the long perspective of a Gothic hall stretched across pit and stage; the vista of slender columns and Tudor arches terminating in a mimic painted window. The roof was bright with gay colours, produced by transparent painting; and in lieu of heraldic blazonry, escutcheons charged with a bunch of wheat-ears on an azure field, and inscribed with the motto, 'Free'—the badge of the League—were seen in every direction. Gothic lanterns of gay colours shed light upon the moving throng that filled the gangways, and on the heaps of manufactured articles piled up and hanging down on every side. The contributions from each town occupied a separate stall—Manchester alone having three stalls. The articles offered for sale were of the most varied description, and at one stall there was a veritable lock of Sir Walter Scott's hair offered for the sum of £3 3*s.* A post-office was amongst the ingenious devices for raising money, and disseminating free-trade doctrines. Portraits there were in many forms of Messrs. Cobden, Bright, and Villiers. Although the weather was very unfavourable, the bazaar was most successful. The visitors numbered upwards of 100,000; goods to the value of £20,000 were presented for sale, and 400 ladies, the wives and daughters of leading Free-traders, presided at the stalls. The sum of £25,000 was realized towards the funds of the League. The bazaar attracted great attention in the press, many metro-

politan journals observing that its influence and significance could not be ignored by politicians opposed to the repeal movement.

On the 10th of June, Mr. Villiers submitted for the last time in the House of Commons his motion for a committee of the whole House to consider his resolutions for the abolition of all restrictions on the importation of foreign corn. At the close of a long and able speech, Mr. Villiers said he was at a loss to know what plea would now be urged by the Government in reply to his demand, on behalf of the people, for free access to the means of subsistence. If the Government should either plead the pressure of local taxation, or the peculiar burdens on land, he would reply, 'Bring us in at once an account of what is paid on those scores, and we will show that it is far less than the loss which the people sustain every year owing to the restriction of their supply of food.' He called upon the Government to indemnify the landlords in any way they pleased except that of making the food of the people dear.

Sir James Graham, of whom some hopes had been entertained by the Free-traders, met the motion with a decided negative. He advocated a gradual and cautious policy in legislation affecting the Corn Laws; and said it was his conviction that suddenly and at once to throw open the trade in corn would be inconsistent with the well-being of the community, and would give such a shock to the agricultural interest as would throw many other interests into a state of convulsion.

Mr. Bright expressed his surprise at the Home Secretary's speech, and said he was at a loss to discover whether it was intended to give more hope to the Opposition, or more consolation to the Ministerial side of the House. Sir James had evidently been endeavouring to say one thing in one part of his speech, and to unsay it in the next. In the commencement he had been a furious Free-trader; in the close he had brought forward in a mass all the fallacies of the Protection Society. It was time that this imposture should cease; for so long as it prevailed the country would be involved in a perpetual agitation. The question of the repeal of the Corn Laws was now only one of time. He would score off every part of Sir James Graham's speech after that sentence of it which contained the enunciation that Free Trade was the key-stone of Sir Robert Peel's policy. Let the county members reflect upon that, and let them remember that if Sir Robert Peel gave the word for the repeal of the Corn Laws, they had no power to prevent it. Replying to the objection that the abolition of the Corn Laws

would cause a suspension of labour, Mr. Bright asked, Did the right hon. baronet know that the whole number of persons who were engaged in producing the 2,000,000 quarters of corn he spoke of were not as great as the number of persons who were thrown out of employment probably in one town in this country by the state of things caused by this monopoly, like Sheffield, Leeds, or Stockport? Addressing the agriculturists, he adduced numerous instances of greatly increased importation of articles, the produce of the soil, which had not at all injured the interests of agriculture. He again warned them that there was a strong feeling in the country against protection, which it would not be wise to despise. The hon. member then gave a history of the Anti-Corn Law League, the annual contributions to which had increased from £5,000 in the year of its birth to £110,000 in the present year. His allusion to the Covent Garden Bazaar having been sneered at, he said there was one person who would not sneer at it, and that was Sir Robert Peel. Mr. Bright thus concluded his speech:—

'An hon. member opposite had lately given to the world a book in which he represented the monarch of this country as reigning over two nations, the rich and the poor,* and there was a great deal of truth in that. Others talked of the widening of the separation between the very rich and the very poor. The Corn Law created nothing; it blighted almost everything. There was an abundance of capital, of labour, and of material in this country, but there wanted an honest distribution of it; and that honest distribution could only be given upon those just, true, and immutable principles which the great Creator had given for the regulation of the ordinary affairs of life. He knew that on going to a division his party would be in a minority of course, but he also knew that minorities in that House often became majorities; and if a man advocated a sound principle, and knew that millions out of door supported it, let him not be deterred because the teller gave a majority against it, instead of in its favour. They had seen good principles growing, growing, growing, because everybody supported them; and bad principles fading away, and those who formerly adhered to them ashamed to recall them. If they wanted this law to be maintained on its principle, they should have prevented Caxton from erecting his press in Westminster Abbey, they should have placed an interdict upon Chambers, proscribed Knight's weekly volumes, and put down all newspapers, and, above all, put a stop to those locomotive engines which came up from Manchester to the metropolis in four hours and a half.'

Mr. Cobden complained that the questions mooted by Mr. Villiers had not been met. These were, first, Had they a right to restrict the supply of food for the people? secondly, Was it true that they had a law to that effect? and, thirdly, If their Corn Law was not to that effect, what was its purpose? By careful calculations made, he supported Mr. Villiers's propositions. Lord John Russell pointed out the inconsistencies of

* *Sybil; or, The Two Nations.* By Benjamin Disraeli, M. P.

Sir James Graham, and said that the Corn Law, as it now stood, was vicious in principle, and could not long be maintained in its present condition. He felt himself at liberty to go into committee with Mr. Villiers, and to consider in what way a relaxation of the law could be made. Sir Robert Peel said that if he could believe in the predictions of Mr. Cobden, his objections to an immediate repeal of the Corn Law would be greatly alleviated; but he could not, and therefore must proceed gradually with legislation.

On the division being taken, there appeared for the motion, 122; against, 254; majority against repeal, 132. These numbers indicated a still increasing support to Mr. Villiers's proposition. With those who paired or were absent, there were now 190 members in favour of Free Trade, as compared with 165 in the year 1844.

Confident as the members of the League were, however, of the coming triumph of their cause, there was probably not one amongst them who thought it was so immediate, so close at hand, as it actually was. Precipitating causes—such causes as Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright had again and again said must bring matters to an issue—were already at work to force on repeal; and the curtain was destined shortly to rise on the last act of the great Parliamentary drama in connection with the Corn Laws.

CHAPTER VII.

REPEAL OF THE CORN LAWS.

The Potato Disease in Ireland.—The Government and the Crisis.—Lord John Russell's important Letter declaring for Free Trade.—Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright appeal to the Prime Minister.—The Corn Laws doomed.—Great League Meeting at Covent Garden Theatre.—Cabinet Difficulties. Peel returns to Office.—Meeting of Parliament.—Measure for the Repeal of the Corn Laws introduced.—Sir Robert Peel's Statement.—Protracted Debates.—Mr. Bright's eulogium upon the Premier.—The Corn Importation Bill passes both Houses.—Dissolution of the League.—Interesting proceedings.—Final Speech by Mr. Bright.—Celebrations in the Country. Presentations to the League Leaders.—General Effects of Free Trade.

In the middle of August, 1845, there began to appear the earliest indications of that mysterious potato disease which was to complete the work of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and to force from Parliament that measure of repeal which had long been clamoured for in vain. In Ireland the minute plague spread rapidly, till it blackened thousands of acres, and destroyed the food of millions of men. In a very short time two-thirds of the tubers were found to be rotten within, though large and well-looking without. On the 13th of October Sir R. Peel wrote to Sir J. Graham that the accounts of the state of the potato crop in Ireland were becoming very alarming. Something would have to be done, and he had no confidence in such remedies as the prohibition of exports or the stoppage of distilleries; the removal of the impediments to import was the only effectual remedy.

A meeting of the League was held in the Free Trade Hall on the 28th of October. The object of the meeting was to point out the remedy for the famine which threatened England, and to avert the misery, starvation, and death of millions in Ireland. Mr. Cobden said the natural and obvious remedy was to open the ports. Russia, Turkey, Germany, and Holland had done so, and why should not our Government follow their example? Mr. Bright said that everything around was telling them in a voice louder than ever that every word of reproach, every harsh saying which they had uttered against the Corn Law, had not by any means conveyed its true character as it was then exhibited. The Corn Law was now having its due

effect, and one which its framers anticipated—that of taking something from the produce of the millions of almost starving poor, and handing it to the rich. Looking at the matter in every light, he added, 'How dreadful the abandonment of duty, how awful the crime, not less than that of those who made the Corn Law, if we step back from our place, if we fail in the work we have set ourselves, which is to abolish the law that restricts the bounty of Providence, and to establish the original and heaven-given law which will give plenty to all the earth.'

Cabinet Councils now became frequent, and in a memorandum, afterwards published, dated November 1st, the Premier asked, 'Can we vote money for the sustenance of any considerable portion of the people on account of actual or apprehended scarcity, and maintain in full operation the existing restrictions on the free import of grain? I am bound to say my impression is that we cannot.' The Government were memorialized from all quarters instantly to open the ports. The Prime Minister was desirous of giving way, but there were dissensions in the Cabinet, his only supporters being the Earl of Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Sidney Herbert. The Dublin Mansion House Relief Committee issued a series of resolutions, one of which was to the following effect: 'We feel it an imperative duty to discharge our consciences of all responsibility regarding the undoubtedly approaching calamitous famine and pestilence throughout Ireland, an approach which is imminent and almost immediate, and can be obviated only by the most prompt, universal, and efficacious measures of procuring food and employment for the people.' The Committee impeached the conduct of the Ministry in refusing to open the ports, or to call Parliament together earlier than usual.

At this juncture, Lord John Russell wrote from Edinburgh to his constituents, the electors of the City of London, admitting that it was no longer worth while to contend for a fixed duty. 'Let us unite to put an end to a system which has been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter division among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people.' His lordship called upon the Government for satisfactory measures. Lord Morpeth, in forwarding a subscription to the League Fund, wrote to Mr. Edward Baines: 'I wish to record, in the most emphatic way I can, my conviction that the time has come for a final repeal of the Corn Laws, and my protest against the continued inaction of the State in the present emergency.' When this letter was read at the Leeds meeting, the enthusi-

asm which prevailed was indescribable. It also caused considerable excitement in London.

Mr. Cobden, speaking at one meeting in London, called on Sir Robert Peel to save the country from the impending famine. 'There is no man in the world,' he said, 'whether he be the Grand Turk, or whether he be a Russian despot, who has more power than Sir Robert Peel now has in this country. He has the power, and I say he is a criminal and a poltroon if he hesitates a whit.' Mr. Bright also said: 'Sir Robert knows well enough what is wanted, and were his Government ten times as strong as it is, it must yield before the imperious and irresistible necessity which is every day gaining upon it. From his recent speeches I should argue that he intends to repeal the Corn Law. He cannot say what he now says, and yet mean ever to go back to the old and foolish policy of protection. He sprang from commerce, and until he has proved it himself, I will never believe that there is any man—much less will I believe that he is the man—who would go down to the grave, having had the power to deliver that commerce, and yet not having had the manliness, honesty, and courage to do it.'

On the 4th of December, the *Times* made the startling announcement that Parliament would be summoned for the first week in January, and that the Royal Speech would recommend an immediate consideration of the Corn Laws, preparatory to their total repeal. This information was described as an 'atrocious fabrication' by the *Standard*, but its accuracy was speedily demonstrated. Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleuch having signified their inability, however, to support the Premier in his repeal policy, Sir Robert Peel temporarily resigned office on the 5th of December. At the same time, he intimated to the Queen that if she should entrust Lord John Russell with the formation of a Government, he would support measures founded on the general principle indicated in his lordship's letter to the electors of the City of London. On the 15th, Mr. Cobden, speaking at a meeting in the London Guildhall, said he had been over almost every part of the country, and the accounts he had received of the potato crop were so bad, that he believed in many districts before next spring there would not be any even for seed. 'What infatuation, then, must it be on the part of those dukes and squires who go maundering about like old women at public meetings—who rise in the morning and go out to shoot, and come home in the afternoon to their champagne and venison.' If there was no potato rot, he wanted to know what murrain it was which had

crept into the Cabinet. At another gathering in Covent Garden Theatre, on the 17th, he said that the League had only to work for six months longer, when it would be dissolved into its primitive elements by the triumph of its principles. On the same day, Sir Robert Peel wrote to the Queen that he could not fetter himself, before the Corn Laws were discussed in Parliament, by a distinct pledge to Lord John Russell that he would support their immediate and total repeal.

At this critical period, a great League meeting was held at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 19th, Mr. Bright being the principal speaker. His address on that occasion was very telling and vigorous. He began by stating that during the past month he had been present at meetings in Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, Somersetshire, and Middlesex; and he had been forced to the conclusion that the agitation throughout the kingdom was of no trivial or common character. The question now arose, how was social order to be preserved? and he affirmed that the continuous government of the country by any Administration was totally incompatible with the maintenance of the Corn Laws. The speaker then eloquently said,—

'This contest has now been waged for seven years; it was a serious one when commenced, but it is a far more serious one now. Since the time when we first came to London to ask the attention of Parliament to the question of the Corn Law, two millions of human beings have been added to the population of the United Kingdom. The table is here as before; the food is spread in about the same quantity as before; but two millions of fresh guests have arrived, and that circumstance makes the question a serious one, both for the Government and for us. These two millions are so many arguments for the Anti-Corn-Law League—so many emphatic condemnations of the policy of this iniquitous law. I see them now in my mind's eyes ranged before me, old men and young children, all looking to the Government for bread; some endeavouring to resist the stroke of famine, clamorous and turbulent, but still arguing with us; some dying mute and uncomplaining. Multitudes have died of hunger in the United Kingdom since we first asked the Government to repeal the Corn Law; and although the great and powerful may not regard those who suffer mutely and die in silence, yet the recording angel will note down their patient endurance, and the heavy guilt of those by whom they have been sacrificed.'

Mr. Bright then went on to observe that there had been a succession of skirmishes, but they now approached the final conflict. The struggle was that of the many against the few—between the numbers, wealth, comforts, the all, in fact, of the middle and industrious classes, and the wealth, the union, and sordidness of a large section of the aristocracy of this empire; 'and we have to decide,—for it may be that this meeting itself may to no little extent be the arbiter in this great contest,—

we have to decide now, in this great struggle, whether in this land in which we live we will longer bear the wicked legislation to which we have been subjected, or whether we will make one effort to right the vessel, to keep her in her true course, and if possible to bring her safely to a secure haven.' The landlord rule in this country had been long, and its legislation corrupt and unequal. Under the sway of landlordism, great numbers of the people had been reduced to pauperism. He proceeded to demonstrate the evils of protection, and the miserable condition of the agricultural labourers. 'The crowning offence of the system of legislation under which we have been living is, that a law has been enacted in which it is altogether unavoidable that these industrious and deserving men should be brought down to so helpless and despairing a condition. By withdrawing the stimulus of competition, the law prevents the good cultivation of the land of our country, and therefore diminishes the supply of food which we might derive from it. It prevents, at the same time, the importation of foreign food from abroad, so that when we are forced to go there for them, they are not to be found.'

The most demoniacal ingenuity, he asserted, could not invent a scheme more calculated than this ingeniously malignant law to bring millions of the working classes into a state of pauperism, suffering, discontent, and insubordination. And that a fat and sleek dean, a dignitary of the Church and a great philosopher, recommended for the consumption of the people—he did not read a paper about the supplies that were to be had in the great valley of the Mississippi—Swede turnips and mangel-wurzel;—and the Hereditary Earl Marshal of England, as if to out-herod Herod himself, recommended hot water and a pinch of curry powder.

Here was a law which said to twenty-seven millions of people, 'Scramble for what there is, and if the poorest and the weakest starve, foreign supplies shall not come in for fear some injury should be done to the mortgaged landowners.' But the promises of Lord John Russell, or any other Minister, to repeal this law were only conditional. They could not of themselves repeal the Corn Law. It could only be done by the unequivocal expression of the public will. Having promised such a demonstration throughout the country as should make the monopolists quail, Mr. Bright thus concluded :—

'Two centuries ago the people of this country were engaged in a fearful conflict with the Crown. A despotic and treacherous monarch assumed to himself the right to levy taxes without the consent of Parliament and the

people. That assumption was resisted. This fair island became a battle-field, the kingdom was convulsed, and an ancient throne overturned. And if our forefathers, two hundred years ago, resisted that attempt—if they refused to be the bondmen of a king, shall we be the born thralls of an aristocracy like ours? Shall we, who struck the lion down, shall we pay the wolf homage? or shall we not, by a manly and united expression of public opinion, at once, and for ever, put an end to this giant wrong?

'Our cause is at least as good as theirs. We stand on higher vantage-ground; we have larger numbers at our back; we have more of wealth, intelligence, union, and knowledge of the political rights and the true interests of the country; and, what is more than all this, we have a weapon, a power, and machinery, which is a thousand times better than that of force, were it employed—I refer to the registration, and especially to the 40*s.* freehold, for that is the great constitutional weapon which we intend to wield, and by means of which we are sure to conquer, our laurels being gained, not in bloody fields, but upon the hustings and in the registration courts. Now I do hope that if this law be repealed within the next six months, and if it should then be necessary that this League should disperse, I do trust the people of England will bear in mind how great a panic has been created among the monopolist-rulers by this small weapon, which we have discovered hid in the Reform Act, and in the constitution of the country. I would implore the middle and working classes to regard it as the portal of their deliverance, as the strong and irresistible weapon before which the domination of this hereditary peerage must at length be laid in the dust.'

On the morning after the delivery of this speech, Lord John Russell informed Her Majesty that he had found it impossible to form an Administration. Sir Robert Peel was sent for the same day, and agreed to return to office. The Duke of Buccleuch now ceased his opposition, and the only change in the official list of the restored Peel Cabinet was the substitution of Mr. Gladstone for Lord Stanley as Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The League held an important meeting at Manchester on the 23rd of December, when it was resolved to raise a fund of a quarter of a million sterling for the purpose of promoting Free-trade principles in the existing emergency. Upwards of £60,000 was subscribed in the room—the largest sum ever subscribed in the same space of time for any cause. Mr. Bright expressed his great delight with the proceedings. They had never seen in all their experience any meeting to compare with that. The past meetings had demonstrated that the supporters of the League were in earnest, and this meeting, if any confirmation were required, furnished that confirmation; and he was convinced that it would have a powerful effect on public opinion. Amongst firms which subscribed £1,000 each were the following: Messrs. S. Greg and Sons, T. Hoyle and Sons, Robert Platt, James Chadwick, John Bright and Brothers, Thomas Ashton and Sons, H. and E. Ashworth, A. and S. Henry and C., and J. and N. Philips and Co. The sub-

scribers of £500 each were very numerous. This meeting had a powerful influence upon the monopolists and the press, showing, as it did, the unalterable determination of the League to push their campaign to victory.

Parliament met on the 22nd of January, and Sir Robert Peel, in the course of some personal explanations made during the debate on the Address, admitted that his opinions on the question of the Corn Laws had undergone a complete change. 'The immediate cause of resignation,' he said, 'was the great and mysterious calamity which had befallen Europe—the failure of the potato crop. But it would be unfair to the House if I were to say that I attached exclusive importance to that particular cause. I will not withhold the homage which is due to the progress of reason and to truth, by denying that my opinions on the subject of protection have undergone a change. Whether holding a private station or in a public one, I will assert the privilege of yielding to the force of argument and conviction, and acting upon the results of enlarged experience. It may be supposed that there is something humiliating in making such admissions. Sir, I feel no such humiliation; I should feel humiliation if, having modified or changed my opinions, I declined to acknowledge the change for fear of incurring the imputation of inconsistency.' The Prime Minister further said that while he should have regarded relief from the task before him with honour as a favour, yet while honour and a sense of public duty required it, he did not shrink from office. 'I do not desire to be the Minister of England, but while I am Minister of England I will hold office by no servile tenure. I will hold office unshackled by any other obligation than that of consulting the public interest, and providing for the public safety.'

The Government measures were brought forward in the House of Commons on the 27th. The House was crowded, even to its approaches, and amongst the distinguished strangers present were Prince Albert and the Duke of Cambridge. Sir Robert Peel's speech occupied three hours and a half. He proposed, he said, with regard to the great question of the Corn Laws, that there should be a total repeal at the end of three years. From the passing of the Act, and until the 1st of February, 1849, the maximum duty would be 10*s.*, exigible when the price was under 48*s.*, and to fall a shilling with every shilling of rise in the price till the price reached 53*s.*, when the duty was to fall to the minimum of 4*s.* The duties on barley and oats would undergo an alteration proportionally the same; all grain from British colonies to be admitted free of duty, and maize or In-

dian corn to be admitted, immediately after the passing of the Act, at a nominal duty. Other articles in the tariff, under the heads of articles of food, agriculture, manufacture, and miscellaneous, were dealt with, to the amount of several hundreds, in the way of duties repealed or reduced. By way of compensating the landed interest, the Premier proposed a consolidation of parish-road trusts, an alteration in the law of settlement, transferring the burden from the parish of the pauper's birth to that in which he had an industrial residence of five years last preceding his application for relief; the payment from the treasury of one-half the cost of medical attendance on paupers; and the removal from the local rates of the expenses of criminal prosecutions, which were to be defrayed in future by an annual Parliamentary vote. In closing, Sir Robert Peel said: 'Because this is a time of peace, because you are not subject to any coercion whatsoever, I entreat you to bear in mind that the aspect of affairs may change; that we may have to contend with worse harvests than that of this year; and it may be wise to avail ourselves of the present moment to effect an adjustment which I believe must ultimately be made, and which could not be long delayed without engendering feelings of animosity among different classes of Her Majesty's subjects.' As he had a sincere conviction that the settlement could not be delayed, he should deeply lament the failure of measures intended to conduce to a 'friendly feeling between different classes—to provide additional security for the continuance of peace—and to maintain content and happiness at home by increasing the comforts and bettering the condition of the great body of the people.'

The Ministerial scheme of course excited the anger and the bitter denunciations of the Protectionists. The League, on the other hand, while welcoming the great changes proposed, still held to the chief article of their creed—total and immediate repeal.

Now arose that long course of vituperation of Sir Robert Peel in which Mr. Disraeli bore so conspicuous a part. The Minister who had given way to the wishes of the people, and who had every inducement to retire into private life instead of taking upon himself the lead in the abrogation of the Corn Laws, was assailed with extraordinary personalities, and in a manner probably unprecedented in the career of a political leader.

But the work went forward. The debate on Sir Robert Peel's propositions was carried on by repeated adjournments for twelve nights. Upwards of one hundred speeches were de-

livered during the debate, forty-eight members speaking in favour of Free Trade, and fifty-five in favour of Protection. The Premier, in the middle of the debate, entered into an elaborate defence of his scheme, asking the House which should be its motto, 'Advance' or 'Retrograde.' He earnestly entreated the gentlemen of England to support these measures, by which they would take another guarantee for the content, and love, and willing obedience of the population. If a calamitous time should come, when they must offer to the mass of the people exhortations to bear their destiny with fortitude, it would be a consolation for them to reflect that they had relieved themselves from the necessity of regulating the supply of food in a time of famine; and that, in a period free from clamour and excitement, they had anticipated difficulty and removed every impediment to the free circulation of commerce. The Premier spoke on this occasion for nearly three hours, and in his best vein.

On the evening following this speech, Mr. Bright addressed the House. Having first demonstrated the necessity for measures of relief, he passed this glowing eulogium upon Sir Robert Peel:—

'You say the right hon. baronet is a traitor. It would ill become me to attempt his defence after the speech which he delivered last night—a speech, I will venture to say, more powerful and more to be admired than any speech which has been delivered within the memory of any man in this House. (*Cheers.*) I watched the right hon. baronet as he went home last night, and for the first time I envied him his feelings. That speech has circulated by scores of thousands throughout the kingdom and throughout the world; and wherever a man is to be found who loves justice, and wherever there is a labourer whom you have trampled under foot, that speech will bring joy to the heart of the one, and hope to the breast of the other. You chose the right hon. baronet—why? Because he was the ablest man of your party. You always said so, and you will not deny it now. Why was he the ablest? Because he had great experience, profound attainments, and an honest regard for the good of the country. You placed him in office. When a man is in office he is not the same man as when in opposition. The present generation, or posterity, does not deal as mildly with men in government as with those in opposition. There are such things as the responsibilities of office. Look at the population of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and there is not a man among you who would have the valour to take office and raise the standard of Protection, and cry, "Down with the Anti-Corn-Law League, and Protection for ever!" There is not a man in your ranks who would dare to sit on that bench as the Prime Minister of England pledged to maintain the existing law. (*Loud cheers.*) The right hon. baronet took the only, the truest course—he resigned. He told you by that act, I will no longer do your work. I will not defend your cause. The experience I have had since I came into office renders it impossible for me at once to maintain office and the Corn Laws. The right hon. baronet resigned—he was then no longer your Minister. He came back to office as the Minister of his Sovereign and of the people—not the Minister of a class who first raised him into office for their own special and private purposes.' (*Loud cries of* '*Hear, hear.*')

In regard to this speech, the *Sun* observed that the singularity of Mr. Bright's position, as he rose to address the ministerialists and oppositionists, seemed to animate him to an unwonted pitch of rhetorical excellence; his periods were, as usual, adroitly and elegantly turned; but, in addition to this, they alternately glittered with satire, and burnt and thrilled with a tone even pathetic. Those who sat near Sir Robert Peel observed that the tears started to his eyes at this unexpected generosity on the part of a political antagonist.

The first reading of the Premier's resolutions was ultimately carried by a majority of 337 to 240. When the House went into Committee, Mr. Villiers's amendment on the first clause, making the action of the bill immediate instead of prospective, was negatived by 265 to 78 votes. During the discussion, Mr. Bright made some allusions to the whining tone of the agriculturists, as exemplified in their speeches on that occasion. He recollected, he said, in one of Mr. Dickens's works, that he gave an account of an election to the dignified office of parish beadle, on which occasion the walls were covered with placards bearing the inscription, 'Vote for Scroggins and eleven small children.' There was scarcely, even in that, anything more pitiable than to witness the great landowners of the country coming to the House and talking of the incumbrances upon their estates, or of the necessity of providing fortunes for their grown-up daughters. On the general question, he remarked that if they did not gain immediate repeal that session, they would have to discuss it every session until the law was fairly abolished.

After another fine speech by Sir Robert Peel, the second reading of the Corn Importation Bill was carried, on the 27th of March, by a majority of 88, in a House of 516. Although large Free-trade majorities were obtained at every stage, the Protectionists fought the measure stoutly on all points. At length, on the morning of the 16th of May, the third reading of the bill was carried in the House of Commons by a majority of 98 in a House of 556. It then went to the House of Lords, where it also passed after debates on various stages, and became law on the 25th of June. On the same day the Peel Ministry fell upon the Irish Coercion Bill. The Premier, in his speech on leaving office, delivered on the 29th, reviewed the course and policy of his Government, paid a warm tribute to Mr. Cobden, and closed with these memorable words: 'In relinquishing power, I shall leave a name, severely censured I fear by many who, on public grounds, deeply regret the sever-

ance of party ties—deeply regret that severance, not from interested or party motives, but from the firm conviction that fidelity to party engagements—the existence and maintenance of a great party—constitutes a powerful instrument of government. I shall surrender power severely censured also by others who, from no interested motive, adhere to the principle of Protection, considering the maintenance of it to be essential to the welfare and interests of the country: I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist who, from less honourable motives, clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit; but *it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of goodwill in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice.*'

The words printed in italics were subsequently engraved upon one of the numerous memorials erected to the eminent statesman who uttered them.

The work of the League having been now practically accomplished, that organization was dissolved at a meeting held in the Manchester Town Hall on the 2d of July. Mr. G. Wilson, chairman of the Council, briefly sketched the operations of the League from its commencement. He was followed by Mr. Cobden, who said it would be impossible ever again to impose the Corn Laws. Referring to the ex-Premier, he added, 'If he has lost office, he has gained a country. For my part, I would rather descend into private life with that last measure of his, which led to his discomfiture, in my hand, than mount to the highest pinnacle of human power.' Mr. Cobden then moved a resolution formally dissolving the League. This was seconded by Mr. Bright, who said that, under the circumstances of that meeting, he would be the very last man to utter one syllable of unworthy exultation over those who had been defeated. But he was of opinion that that final meeting might have some result beyond that of merely winding up the affairs of the League; that by it they might point a moral and learn a lesson; that they might contemplate the past, and to some extent look into the future. The public had learned that there was nothing which could be held out to the intelligent people of this kingdom which was so calculated to stimulate them to action—to united and persevering action—as a great and sacred principle like that which was espoused by the League. 'They have learned that there is in public opinion a power much greater

than that residing in any particular form of government; that although you have in this kingdom a system of government which is called "popular" and "representative"—a system which is somewhat clumsily contrived, and which works with many jars and joltings—that still, under the impulse of a great principle, with great labour and with great sacrifices, all those obstacles are overcome, so that out of a machine especially contrived for the contrary, justice and freedom are at length achieved for the nation; and the people have learned something beyond this, viz., that the way to freedom is henceforward not through violence and bloodshed.' The League would henceforth stand as a sign of a new order of things. It had come into conflict with the great proprietors of the soil, and the power of the landed aristocracy had succumbed to it. We had been living through a revolution without knowing it. Mr. Bright, alluding to Sir Robert Peel, said he rejoiced that it was one of themselves who had given the finishing stroke to that gigantic monopoly which they had opposed. The National Anti-Corn-Law League had been charged with all kinds of sinister ends, but now that its work was ended, the Crown was as safe and as popular as it had ever been: while as for the House of Lords, he had a greater respect for it now than he ever had at any former period. They might also have a higher opinion of the House of Commons. The country, too, was in a much better position now than when the agitation commenced, for it had been taught that justice between man and man was really the principle on which legislation ought to take place. In conclusion, Mr. Bright said: 'We need not raise monuments of stone, or of brass, or of any such durable material, to the honour of this League. If we have not been mistaken during the seven years we have worked, if we are not mistaken now—and I think I may say for all who have been working in this cause that we not only do not believe that we are mistaken, but we are confirmed in our conviction that we shall find the result of this measure in extended freedom and increased security, not only for property, but for labour, and for the rewards and enjoyments which are procured by labour; and I trust and believe—I speak conscientiously, and after years of consideration—I believe that we have cleared away the greatest obstacle in the path of the people; that we now stand on the threshold of a new career; and that if the spirit, the energy, and the intelligence, the great and noble qualities of which we boast ourselves the possessors, and which to some extent have been exhibited in the working of this League—if we still bring those

qualities into action, I know not that there is any height to which the nation may not aspire; and I know not but that in all good things we may lead forward other nations on the same career.'

The resolution was carried with loud cheers, and votes of thanks were then passed to the officers of the League. A sum of £10,000 was voted to the chairman, Mr. George Wilson, who had systematically declined to receive a farthing of remuneration for his services. It is stated that as the meeting drew towards its close, a feeling of grave solemnity stole over the five hundred gentlemen present. Those who had so often met together during the great contest would never meet under similar circumstances again. Mr. Cobden reminded them that they were under obligations to the Queen, who was said to have favoured their cause as one of humanity and justice; and with three loyal and hearty cheers in her honour the meeting dissolved.

Celebrations in honour of the repeal of the Corn Laws took place in various parts of the country. Mr. Bright's native town of Rochdale was conspicuous in its rejoicings. There was a procession embracing some twelve thousand people, and after this the manufacturers and other employers treated their work-people to sumptuous dinners. In the evening a meeting of Messrs. Bright's workpeople was held in the schoolroom attached to the mill. Mr. Jacob Bright took the chair, and Mr. Elihu Burritt, the 'learned blacksmith,' who had just arrived from the United States, spoke of the great victory which had been achieved—a victory far more noble than the sanguinary one of Waterloo. Mr. John Bright also addressed the gathering, and while he predicted a better state of things now that the Corn Law was gone, he reminded his hearers that people could not live without work, or have large incomes without toiling at some honest industry. But there would be a great demand for labour, and a more regular income for those who lived by labour, 'if in both classes of employers and employed,' said Mr. Bright, 'we cultivate feelings of justice and kindness to each other, sympathy and honour and respect for each other. I do look forward to a great and striking and permanent improvement in this district; and if there be political institutions which it may become us, before long, to struggle to remove, I trust that as we have struggled for this great blessing, and achieved this great conquest, we may struggle in a like spirit of harmony for other things that are before us; and that, whilst endeavouring to improve the state of matters around us,

we may look into our homes and houses and cottages, that we may educate our children, and with all cordial sympathy and co-operation spread amongst the whole society of which we are members greater intelligence, greater morality, greater virtue; and then with these there must inevitably be greater and more enduring happiness.'

Mr. Bright's Durham constituents invited him to a banquet, in order to testify their admiration of his independent and honourable conduct, his efficient services in Parliament, and above all his 'eminent advocacy of the recent important national measure.' The Mayor presided, and the hon. member, in responding to the toast of his health, said he took that meeting as an evidence that he had not altogether left unfulfilled the promises and expectations which he held out three years ago. Dealing with the great measure which had just been achieved, he said that such revolutions were not to be effected by merely vapouring about freedom. 'There have been demagogues in this country whose hands are never out of their kid gloves, and whose feet are always in boots of japanned leather. (*Laughter.*) Now these are the men who can never obtain such triumphs as have been obtained this year. It requires that they should not only themselves be the advocates of a just policy, but also that they should show their willingness to make sacrifices, and to work continually until the public mind is leavened and saturated with the truths they would teach; and this is the only way in this age whereby great and beneficial changes can be effected. I do not wish to boast of myself, and all those with whom I acted, but I do think that when men for many years have seen the necessity of the application of a great principle, and have devoted themselves without intermission to its establishment, and at length succeeded against the most tremendous obstacles—I do think they have a right to look to their fellow-countrymen for some degree of approval—that at least they are men entitled to be heard when they express their opinions on any great national or political question.'

Mr. Cobden, who had sacrificed his business in order to further the great cause he had at heart, was presented by the Free-traders of the kingdom with the sum of £75,000. At a later period, and at a time of great anxiety, he was presented with a further sum of £40,000. Mr. Bright also was presented with a valuable memento of the services he had rendered to the League. The subscription set on foot having resulted in a sum of upwards of £5,000, this was expended in the purchase of a library of 1,200 volumes—the selection of the works being left

to Mr. Bright—and a large, handsome oak bookcase to contain them, which runs the length of the library at One Ash. The design of the bookcase recalls the free-trade struggle. The supports between the large glass panels are elegantly carved into sheaves of corn, and surmounting the cornice is a relief showing a vessel homeward bound—the burden of the design being 'Free Trade in Corn.'

There was a temporary revival of the League in 1852, on the accession to office of Lord Derby's strongly protectionist Government. There was some danger of reactionary legislation, and the council of the League and its chief supporters were summoned to meet again in Manchester, there to confer upon the condition of public affairs. Mr. Cobden proposed a resolution reconstituting the League, in consequence of the advent of Lord Derby's Ministry to power. Amongst other resolutions carried was one moved by Mr. Bright, to the effect that a memorial to the Queen, praying for an immediate dissolution of Parliament, be signed by the Chairman on behalf of the meeting, and transmitted for presentation to Her Majesty. Mr. Bright said, alluding to the demand that they should give the new Government a fair trial, 'We have been trying them all our lives. We have tried both them and the Corn Law, and so far as they are connected with that question, we say that a party more hostile to the true rights of this country, more revolutionary in its character, never held the reins of office.' It was their first duty to drive them from the offices where they had no right whatsoever to be. The Government was one which, on a question of industrial freedom, had not and could not have any sympathy with either the wants or wishes or interests of the population of the great towns and cities of the United Kingdom. He had not the shadow of a doubt that if the question were put fairly to the constituencies, a large majority would, in 1852, ratify, confirm, and seal for ever the policy which was adopted in 1846. Throughout all ranks and classes in the country, the conviction was spreading that not only was the comfort of millions of homes increased, but that the political and social safety of the country during the past four years had been owing in a large degree to the policy of 1846.

Subscriptions were called for, and in a very short time a sum of nearly £70,000 was subscribed. Though the fears of the League were not groundless, the general election saved them another long campaign. Parliament was dissolved on the 1st of July, and the new House was so largely composed of Free-traders, that all fears of protectionist legislation were speedily

at an end. Lord Derby's Government was succeeded by the Coalition Ministry of the Earl of Aberdeen.

A recent writer, Mr. A. Mongredien, dealing with the general results of Free Trade upon the commerce of the country, has observed that 'just as the Free-trade system enabled us to take the utmost possible advantage of the period of prosperity, so it has enabled us to meet the phase of reaction and adversity with less strain on our resources than any of the protected countries.' Any change, therefore, in the direction of protection would prove in the highest degree inexpedient and disastrous. The great lesson we should learn is to be prepared for those fluctuations in trade which must inevitably occur, and not to act in seasons of prosperity as though there would never more be a season of adversity. The writer whom we have just quoted has also clearly proved, by arguments and statistics, the following, amongst other propositions:—'That Free Trade is the only system under which capital and labour find their most natural and profitable fields for employment. That the protective system transfers capital and labour from natural and profitable into forced and unprofitable employments, artificially raises the cost of commodities, forfeits the advantages accruing from the division of labour, reduces foreign trade, and tends to isolate a country from the rest of the world. That the reciprocity or retaliatory system, were it practicable (and it is not), would be fraught with all the evils of protection, of which it is the reproduction under another name.'

M. Chevalier, who was entertained by the Manchester Chamber of Commerce in May, 1875, referred in terms of high praise to the League and its leaders. Of the latter he said, 'The names of these men, so deserving to be preserved for ages, ought to be inscribed in letters of gold on the walls of the meeting room of the Chamber of Commerce of Manchester. The first name would be that of Richard Cobden; next would come the name of John Bright; and the President of that evening, Mr. Edmund Ashworth, partook with his brother, Henry Ashworth, the honour of having been from the first one of the most devoted and most resolute members of the League.'

This eulogium was not exaggerated, for the good which these reformers did will live after them through many generations. The National Anti-Corn-Law League laboured on behalf of humanity, and by humanity it has already been crowned. As regards the subject of our biography, and his relation to that great movement, there is no episode in his career which in the eyes of posterity, will reflect greater lustre upon his name.

CHAPTER VIII.

ELECTION FOR MANCHESTER—PERSONAL DETAILS.

The General Election of 1847.—Mr. Bright returned for Manchester.—Scene at the Hustings.—Speech of the New Member.—Moral of his Election.—Mr. Bright's Second Marriage.—His Family.—Death of his child Leonard.

PARLIAMENT was dissolved in the year 1847 under circumstances devoid of any unusual political excitement. There was, it is true, considerable interest manifested in various individual contests, but as the old Parliament had died a natural death on the completion of its full constitutional term, and as there was no great party question demanding immediate settlement, the election generally was one of the quietest on record. Some well-known political characters voluntarily relinquished Parliamentary honours at this juncture; while a few others, including the brilliant orator and statesman Macaulay, were rejected by their former constituents.

About nine months before the dissolution, the Liberals of Manchester prepared for the eventuality of a contest. With singular unanimity, they resolved upon securing Mr. John Bright, if possible, as their representative in the ensuing Parliament. The Manchester Reform Association met on the 14th of October, 1846, and resolved that a deputation should wait upon the hon. member for Durham, formally requesting him to offer himself as a candidate. Mr. Bright agreed to be put in nomination if the recommendation of the Association should be endorsed by the electors. He also wrote a letter from Rochdale on the 15th, in which he said: 'I am induced to consent to become a candidate for the suffrages of the electors of Manchester in the belief that to a large extent my sentiments accord with theirs, and because my sympathies are bound up in an especial manner with the advancement of the interests of that great and industrious population of which Manchester may be deemed the centre.'

The choice of the Association was a natural and reasonable one, Mr. Bright being closely identified with Manchester interests. An aggregate gathering of the electors was held in the Free Trade Hall, on the 18th of the same month, in order

to indorse the selection. Mr. G. Wilson presided. Mr. Bright, having been formally nominated, addressed the meeting. 'It may be thought I have no qualification,' he said, 'which should entitle me to ask for the suffrages of any of the electors of Manchester. I said before that accident had made me a public man; that I had no desire to leave the occupation in which I had been brought up; and I can say now that home and domestic claims have to me lost none of their relish. It would be to me personally no discomfort that not you alone, but every constituency in the kingdom, should think that I was not qualified from my opinions to represent them.'

It is curious to note how Mr. Bright still shrank from coming forward prominently as a public man, although opinion had now become universal that he was well qualified for such a position. Continuing his address, he remarked: 'I can assure this meeting that there is scarcely any occupation in life which is a more chequered one—which has more of trouble to balance its delights, more of suffering to compensate for its enjoyments, than that of an honest representative of the people. But if this meeting, and after this meeting the still larger body of the electors whom you may be supposed to represent, should think me a fit person to speak in your name in the British House of Commons, I will not shrink from the heavy, the onerous duties which that appointment would impose upon me. I cannot boast of blood and ancestry. My ancestry were people who followed an honourable industry—such as I myself should have preferred always to follow—such as you follow now, and such as your forefathers followed. My sympathies are naturally with the class with which I am connected, and I would infinitely prefer to raise the class of which I am one, than by any means whatever to creep above it or out of it. If I am elected, I can only promise you zeal which I think few can surpass me in for those great public questions with which I have been connected, and for those principles which I have espoused; and it will be to me ample compensation for any labour I may endure, for any obloquy I may meet with, for any suffering I may undergo, if in years to come—if years to come should be granted me—I may be able to look back and reflect that I have done something for the furtherance of those great principles and objects with which the name of Manchester is so gloriously identified.'

This frank and outspoken statement was received with great favour, the whole audience rising *en masse* and cheering vigourously. Mr. Bright's candidature now became an actual fact, and meetings were frequently held in its support, many of which

the candidate himself attended. The Conservatives at first indulged a hope of contesting the representation, and an application was made to Lord Lincoln, son of the Duke of Newcastle, to come forward. His lordship made some inquiries, however, as to the result of the Conservative canvass, and finding that the support promised was not sufficient to justify him in coming forward, he wisely declined to put his friends to the expense of a useless contest.

The election took place on the 29th of July, in St. Ann's Square, and for the first time in the history of the borough it was not contested. Some ten thousand persons were present in front of the hustings. Although extremely popular with a large portion of the constituency, there were even some Liberals, or rather Whigs, who opposed Mr. Bright's candidature. Then there was a portion of the working classes who did not approve of his views on factory legislation. The presence of this element led to Mr. Bright being disturbed in his speech on the hustings; but the great majority of those present were with him. It is in the power of a hundred persons to spoil the enjoyment and comfort of ten thousand; and by one such small band of obstructionists—incited, it was understood, purposely to the work—the proceedings at the Manchester election were rather disagreeably diversified.

The Mayor, Mr. Elkanah Armitage, having opened the proceedings, Mr. Alderman Watkin nominated the Right Hon. T. Milner Gibson as a fit and proper person to represent the constituency in Parliament, and Mr. Alderman Walker seconded the motion. Mr. George Wilson then nominated Mr. Bright, observing that he should feel insulted if any man asked him whether Mr. Bright's votes had not always been in favour of popular rights and social progress. Civil and religious freedom was the motto of his party. Mr. Absalom Watkin, in seconding the nomination, said: 'In electing Mr. Bright you will return a member peculiarly fitted for the work he has to do; in electing him you will confer upon him the highest honour the people can bestow upon one of themselves, for there is no greater honour a man can desire than that of being the unbought representative of such a constituency as that of Manchester. You will elevate him to a degree of importance and influence in the House of Commons proportionate to the wealth and independence of this great constituency; you will give him a distinguished place among the representatives of the people, and he will enter the House of Commons unfettered by any pledges, but guided by known principles and strict integrity, prepared

to battle with the enemies of the people, and anxious to effect social and political improvements.'

The Mayor declared Mr. Gibson and Mr. Bright duly elected, there being no other candidate. Mr. Gibson first addressed the vast audience, and then Mr. Bright came forward. He was warmly cheered by his supporters, but the small knot of operatives already mentioned had collected in front of the hustings, and they were evidently bent on creating a disturbance. When the hon. member could be heard above the uproar, his language was of that bold and fearless character it has ever been. 'I am not afraid,' he said, 'to meet any portion of the inhabitants of this town; I have never deceived you, I have never flattered you, and I owe you nothing but for the good opinion of me which you have manifested. You owe me nothing, but that I have endeavoured to do something in your service. I should be ashamed to stand here if I did not believe that I am the representative, not only of the electors of Manchester, but of the interests of the vast majority of the working population of this town.' The confusion now increased, but Mr. Bright could be heard to say, 'I differ from some of you in opinion, but I am not the less entitled to a fair and impartial hearing from you. I am willing to answer to every individual here for any political opinion I hold, for any vote I have ever given, for any speech I have ever made. If it be the will of a small part of this vast assembly to prevent any expression of opinion, their fellow-townsmen will know that they at least are not the friends of freedom, however much they may quarrel with me.'

At this point, according to the Manchester journals, a rather alarming incident occurred. The onward pressure of the multitude caused the crossbeam from the centre of the barrier rails to the central upright of the hustings to break away from its fastenings. The barrier was broken, in spite of the united force of the policemen to keep it in its position. For a moment there was a backward movement of the multitude, but again came the onward pressure, and the police, imagining that the peace was about to be broken, drew their staves before anything could be said to prevent them, and by a free use of them upon the heads of the foremost ranks of the crowd cleared a space in front of the hustings to the depth of twelve yards, in less time than it occupies to record it. Further violence was prevented by the interposition of the Mayor, the Town Clerk, and other gentlemen on the hustings. The people were subsequently allowed to approach the platform. The Mayor made a vain ap-

peal for order, the animus of the noisy portion of the assemblage being but too evident.

Mr. Bright, resuming, said: 'Although there are here many of the operative classes who consider me to be their enemy, I would rather have their ill-will now, while defending their interests, than have their ill-will hereafter, because I have betrayed them. Whether in Parliament or out, whether receiving your hisses or your cheers, I shall still fight for those principles which I have already on many occasions explained to you; and you will find me in the House of Commons just as much your honest representative, and the defender of the rights of the working classes, as of the electors of this town. Gentlemen, I feel confident that of the ten thousand persons here assembled, there are not one hundred men who would not have listened to the arguments and statements which their candidates and members might have to utter. I am blamed here because I did not give my assent to a measure which I believed to be injurious to the operatives themselves. I am blamed because I opposed the Ten Hours' Bill—because I did not consent that Parliament should interfere to close the manufactories of this country for two hours per day. I may have been wrong, but if wrong I am wrong in ignorance, and not in intention. I boldly stated my intention to oppose that measure; I have fearlessly expressed my opinion; I have spoken and I have voted in accordance with that opinion, and I am now ready to maintain it. But hereafter we shall have an opportunity of seeing who was right—the advocates of that measure, or its opponents. If it proves a piece of successful legislation, I shall rejoice; if it be not, I shall be willing to help in its amendment.'

From this frank claim to independence of opinion upon a particular piece of legislation, Mr. Bright passed on to other topics. Alluding to the recent creation of a bishopric of Manchester, he said he regretted that it was not in his power to give a vote in opposition to that 'calamity' which had befallen the town. 'My right hon. colleague, Mr. Gibson, says that he should sleep comfortably if no more bishops had been made; my slumbers would be unbroken if the bishops that are made were to be unmade. I never yet saw any good that the bishops did; I have seen the multitudinous mischiefs that the bishops have done. I believe that hierarchies, state-manufactured clergies, are in themselves evils, and that the time will come when they will be no more known on the face of the earth than some of those great creatures of which we have remnants

left, which lived before the flood.' Mr. Bright further said that before he went to Parliament at all he was a politician, simply because he saw great wrongs inflicted upon the country; he became an active man in politics because he felt it right to use his influence to obtain a redress of those wrongs. During the four years he had sat in Parliament he had never given a vote he would not give again; he had never expressed any opinion which he did not honestly hold; and he would pursue again undeviatingly the same course he had hitherto done. 'I trust,' said the hon. member in conclusion, 'that if at a future time I shall be permitted to render an account of the stewardship which has this day been committed to my hands, that I shall be able to give a good account of it; that I shall be able to say I have abandoned no opinion that I hold; that I have betrayed no man's confidence; that I have not, for anything that Ministers or parties can offer, sacrificed any of those convictions which are dear to me; and that I have, to the best of my power, fulfilled honestly and conscientiously duties of one of the representatives of the borough of Manchester.'

The proceedings shortly afterwards concluded. Manchester had gained a representative who was to find a more important status in political life than he had hitherto taken; and yet his relations with that distinguished constituency were destined only to last for a period of ten years. The reasons for his severance will be dealt with in their proper order.

Meanwhile the friends of progress in the northern city congratulated each other upon their new representative, elected without opposition. This election alone showed the enormous strides which Mr. Bright's principles had made. 'Few facts in the modern history of this country,' wrote the *Manchester Times*, 'are more illustrative of the large futurity they enclose than the simple record we have this day to make of the unopposed election of John Bright to the representation of Manchester. This record marks an era in the history of principles. It is characteristic of the new life that is moving the body politic. It proclaims a *great fact*—a fact greater by the future it represents than the past which it realizes. Unostentatious as the triumph may be, its significance is the deeper on that account. Manchester stands forth to the country and the world, quietly crowning the new alliance of industrial independence with political power. These are the victories that secure the safety of great principles. They embody, not matured opinion alone, but the moral testimony to its depth and strength in the national heart. They exalt political into practical moral

truths, and certify the future supremacy of justice by demonstrating the power that supports it. They are the last vindication needed of the past,—the best of all possible lessons to the statesmen of the future.' The electors were justified in looking to the future of Mr. Bright's career for a true and noble exemplification of what political disinterestedness, unswerving honesty, and unquestionable ability could do for the advancement and realization of great principles. As he had begun—the tried friend of civil and religious liberty—so would he go forward, eager for every conflict where an anomaly was to be rectified, an act of justice to be done, or an abuse to be destroyed.

The year which saw Mr. Bright's election for Manchester witnessed also his second marriage. On the 10th of June, 1847, he was united to Miss Margaret Elizabeth Leatham, daughter of Mr. William Leatham, of Heath House, Wakefield, the well-known West Riding banker. The marriage ceremony was performed in the meeting-house of the Friends, George Street, Wakefield. We shall make no apology for giving a brief description of the rite of marriage as observed by the Friends, from a local historian who records Mr. Bright's marriage. For those who are unfamiliar with the ceremony, the description will possess a general interest. The rite was severely simple. In accordance with the usages of the Friends, the marriage party sat for some time in silence, at the expiration of which Mr. Bright rose and took the right hand of Miss Leatham, pronouncing in low but distinct tones the formula of the Friends, as follows: 'Friends, I take my friend, Margaret Elizabeth Leatham, to be my wife, promising, by Divine assistance, to be unto her a loving and faithful husband till it shall please the Lord by death to separate us.' Miss Leatham then, still holding hands, repeated similar words regarding Mr. Bright, promising to be 'unto him a faithful and loving wife.' A brief space of silence next ensued, which was broken by one of the congregation offering up prayer, the whole assembly standing. Again there was a short period of silence, and then one of the company read the certificate or declaration, which was signed by the bride and bridegroom, and their relations and friends, and afterwards by a large number of the congregation. The whole ceremony occupied about an hour.

This union was blessed by a family of seven children. Mr. John Albert Bright, Mr. Bright's eldest son, was born on the 18th of March, 1848. There were afterwards born, from 1849 to 1863 inclusive, the following children: Mary Harriet, Wil-

liam Leatham, Anna Elizabeth, Margaret Sophia, Leonard, and Philip Bright. Of these, Leonard, a bright and promising child, died in his sixth year, on the 8th of November, 1864, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Tudno, Llandudno. While Mr. Bright, accompanied by his family, was on a visit to his favourite seaside resort, his son was attacked by scarlatina, and died after an illness of four days. St. Tudno's church and graveyard are situate on the high promontory overlooking Llandudno, known as the Great Orme's Head. In this quiet graveyard—where no noise is heard save the dashing of the waves on the rocks beneath—there is a white marble headstone bearing the brief yet touching record, 'In loving remembrance of Leonard Bright (son of John Bright, M. P., and Margaret Elizabeth his wife), who died at Llandudno, November 8th, 1864. Aged nearly six years. "And there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."' The quiet graveyard of St. Tudno has of recent years had many visitants, besides those members of Mr. Bright's family, who have kept the memory of the little child that sleeps there fragrant with flowers.

CHAPTER IX.

IRISH QUESTIONS—1847-53.

State of Ireland in 1847.—Government Measures.—Statesmanlike Speech by Mr. Bright.—Irish Debates in 1848.—Disestablishment recommended by Mr. Bright.—The Land Question.—Irish Difficulties.—Terrible Condition of the Country.—A Great Opportunity for English Statesmen.—Mr. Bright visits Ireland.—Receives an Address from the Irish Residents of Manchester and Salford in 1850.—Important Letter to Dr. Gray on the Irish Church.

THE state of Ireland in the year 1847 was most lamentable. Famine had done its deadly work upon thousands, and a large portion of the population were still in a most wretched and destitute condition. Legislation became imperative, and early in the session Lord John Russell unfolded the Government plans for the relief of the distress. They proposed, amongst other things, the reclamation of waste lands in Ireland, intending to devote a million sterling for this purpose; but this reclamation scheme was never carried out. The chief measure carried was the Poor Law Extension Act, which established an efficient Poor Law in Ireland, and compelled the land to provide for the relief of its own pauperism. Government also made useful provisions in the British American colonies for emigrants on landing, and engaged to facilitate their access to employment. The great calamity the failure of the potato crop had annihilated food to the amount of £16,000,000. Ministers were indemnified for the measures which, by anticipation of the sanction of Parliament, they had been compelled to take. The two Houses also passed a bill for advancing loans from the Treasury to certain Irish railways.

These measures effected a considerable amount of good, but when the new Parliament assembled, towards the close of the year, Ireland was again the all-absorbing topic of discussion. It was now found that the previous remedial legislation required to be supplemented by measures to check the perpetration of crime in certain counties and districts in the sister country. Homicides and crimes of violence generally had increased to an alarming degree; and the almost daily occurrence of outrages in the disturbed districts called for immediate attention on the

part of the Government. The Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, accordingly brought forward a Coercion Bill on the 29th of November, prefacing its introduction by a full exposition of the disorganized state of the country, and a description of the nature of the law by which it was proposed to repress the prevailing crimes and outrages. The Government had hoped, he said, that the late remedial measures would have drawn together the different classes of Irishmen in one common bond of unity, and would have taught them the value of mutual co-operation in promoting the peace, order, and prosperity of their common country. He for one was not yet prepared to abandon that hope; for the case he had to lay before the House applied only to a part of Ireland, and he was happy to state that in the greater portion of it crime had diminished, and life and property were as safe as in England. We need not enter into the Secretary's statistics showing that exceptional legislation was called for in exceptional districts; they were of the character which, unfortunately for Ireland, have had a periodical recurrence in her history.

To prove how necessary the measure was regarded, it may be mentioned that it was supported by such men as Mr. Brotherton, who had opposed every coercion bill which had hitherto been introduced in their time. The bill, notwithstanding, was contested at every stage, but the number of its opponents was exceedingly small, and several Irish representatives voted for it upon the ground that it was far from being of a very stringent character.

In the debate on the third reading, Mr. Bright delivered a statesmanlike speech, pointing out the true remedies to be applied in regard to Ireland. Having presented a petition against the bill, signed by more than 20,000 persons, inhabitants of Manchester, he said he was unwilling to vote without giving the reasons which made it impossible for him to oppose the measure. The case of the Government, so far as the necessity for the bill was concerned, appeared to him to be as clear and as perfect as it could be. From the speech of the Home Secretary, from the unanimous statements of all the newspapers, and from the evidence of all parties connected with Ireland, it was placed beyond a doubt that in the disturbed districts of Ireland the ordinary law was utterly powerless. In England the people were in favour of carrying the law into effect, but in Ireland in certain districts opinion was depraved and thoroughly vitiated. Assassinations were not looked upon as murders, but rather as executions. It was clear, then, that the ordinary law had failed.

But Mr. Bright, after making these admissions, went on to maintain that the Government had not shown the courage which was necessary to deal effectually with the difficulties of Ireland. Lord John Russell had said that all parties were to blame for the misgovernment of Ireland; but he must remember that he was now in the position of a dictator on Irish questions. Then there was another fact to which he (Mr. Bright) would call attention. 'The Irish members complain, and very justly, of the past legislation of this House; but when we call to mind that there are 105 of them here, of whom 60 or 70 are of Liberal politics or opinions, and that about 30 of them are Repealers, and hold very strong views with regard to the mismanagement of Irish affairs in the Imperial Parliament, I think we have a right to complain that they have not laid on the table of the House any one measure which they believe to be necessary to the prosperity of their country.' He was quite sure that 105, or even 30, English members sitting in a Parliament in Dublin, would have done something by working manfully together for their country. The Irish members were as much to blame as any others for the absence of good government in Ireland. The speaker continued:

'I will not, like them, complain of bad legislation, and propose no remedy. What is the condition of Ireland? Last year we voted millions to keep its population from starvation; and this year we have been asked for a further sum, but have not granted it. We maintain a large army in Ireland, and an armed police, which is an army in everything but in name; and yet we have in that country a condition of things which is not to be matched in any other civilized country on the face of the earth, and which is alike disgraceful to Ireland and to us. The great cause of Ireland's calamities is that Ireland is idle. I believe it would be found, on inquiry, that the population of Ireland, as compared with that of England, do not work more than two days per week. Wherever a people are not industrious, and are not employed, there is the greatest danger of crime and outrage. Ireland is idle, and therefore she starves; Ireland starves, and therefore she rebels. We must choose between industry and anarchy; we must have one or the other in Ireland. This proposition I believe to be incontrovertible, and I defy the House to give peace and prosperity to that country until they set in motion her industry, create and diffuse capital, and thus establish those gradations of rank and conditions by which the whole social fabric can alone be held together.'

The idleness of the people in Ireland, said Mr. Bright, was not wholly their fault. It was for the most part a forced idleness, for when Irishmen migrated to Lancashire and other districts, they work as well as others. The great secret of their idleness at home was, that there was little or no trade in Ireland. The hon. gentleman went on to complain that the House had not as yet seen the Government Bill for the sale of encumbered estates in Ireland. There was a unanimous ad-

mission that the misfortunes of Ireland were connected with the questions of the management of the land; and Government should now take their stand above all class interests. He was informed on excellent authority that in the province of Connaught there was not five per cent. of the land free from settlements of one kind or another, and that probably not one per cent. was free from mortgages. If that were true, it was idle to seek elsewhere for the source of the evils of Ireland. Patchwork legislation, speeches, loans, would not now succeed in reviving the industry of Ireland. It was the duty of Government, in the first place, to bring in a Sale of Estates Bill, and thus make it easy for landlords who wished to dispose of their estates to do so. They should bring in a bill to simplify the titles to land in Ireland. They should diminish temporarily, if not permanently, all stamp duties which hindered the transfer of landed property; and they should pass a law by which the system of entailing estates should for the future be prevented.

This last recommendation being received with laughter, Mr. Bright assured his hearers that at some not distant day the entailment of estates would cease, not in Ireland, but in England also. An owner of property should be permitted to leave it to whomsoever he will, provided the individual was living when the will was made. 'Perhaps I shall be told that the laws of entail and primogeniture are necessary for the maintenance of our aristocratic institutions; but if the evils of Ireland spring from this source, I say, perish your aristocratic institutions rather than that a whole nation should be in this terrible condition. If your aristocratic families would rear up their children in habits of business, and with some notions of duty and prudence, these mischievous arrangements would not be required, and they would retain in their possession estates at least as large as is compatible with the interests of the rest of the community. If the laws of entail and primogeniture are sound and just, why not apply them to personal property as well as freehold? Imagine them in force in the middle classes of the community, and it will be seen at once that the unnatural system, if universal, would produce confusion, and confusion would necessitate its total abolition.'

Mr Bright held that everything would be unavailing unless the fetters by which the land was now held were cleared away so that it might become the possession of real owners, and be made instrumental to the employment and sustentation of the people. Speaking as a representative from a county which

suffered extremely from the condition of Ireland, he said that Lancashire was periodically overrun by the pauperism of Ireland; that it had suffered seriously from the pestilence imported; and that many of the evils hitherto attributed to the extension of manufactures in that county had arisen from the enormous immigration of a suffering and pauperized people driven for sustenance from their own country. In conclusion, he said—

'As a Lancashire representative, I protest most solemnly against a system which drives the Irish population to seek work and wages in this country and in other countries, when both might be afforded them at home. Parliament is bound to remedy this state of things. The present Parliament contains a larger number of men of business and of members representing the middle classes than any former Parliament. The present Government is essentially of the middle class—[*a laugh*]—and its members have on many occasions shown their sympathy with it. Let the hon. gentleman laugh; but he will not deny that no Government can long have a majority in this House which does not sympathise with the great middle class of this country. If the Government will manfully and courageously grapple with the question of the condition of land in Ireland, they will, I am convinced, be supported by a majority of the members of this House; they will enable the strength and skill of Irishmen to be expended on their own soil, and lay the foundation of her certain prosperity by giving that stimulus and reward to industry which it cannot have in the present circumstances of that country. Sir, I feel it impossible to refuse my vote in favour of the bill now before us; but I am compelled to say that unless the Government will zealously promote measures in the direction I have indicated, they cannot hope long to retain the confidence of this House or of the country.'

The bill passed the House of Commons by a majority of 159, only fourteen members voting against it. A few days later it went through its various stages in the House of Lords and became law.

In the session of 1848 Mr. Bright again took part in the debates which arose on Irish questions. He twice spoke against the bill, introduced by Sir George Grey, known as the Crown and Government Security Bill, which had for its object the more effectual repression of seditious and treasonable proceedings. This bill was brought in partly in consequence of the Chartist agitation, and partly to meet the disturbed condition of things in Ireland. Mr. Bright held that it was quite within the right of an Englishman or an Irishman to discuss what form of government he would choose to live under; and he further maintained that when the Government brought forward these measures restricting the liberty of the subject, they should accompany them by others devised for the welfare and amelioration of the people.

On the 25th of August Mr. Poulett Scrope brought forward the following resolution: 'That no future appropriation of

moneys taken from general taxation be made in aid of the poor-rate of Irish unions except on condition—1. That it be expended in the productive employment of the able-bodied poor. 2. That repayment be secured by a lien on the property improved by the works, as well as on the rateable property of the union.' The motion was opposed by Lord John Russell, and it was eventually negatived without a division, but it enabled Mr. Bright to deliver an exposition of his views on the subject of the employment of the poor in Ireland. He admitted in the outset that it was difficult to suggest adequate measures of Irish relief without causing two evils: first, the waste of a great portion of the money granted; and next, the demoralization of a large number of those to whom the relief was given. For these reasons he made allowances for the Government. As this was the last opportunity he should have that session, he was anxious to explain briefly what he conceived to be the course which ought to be taken with regard to that country, to enable its population to place themselves in a position of comfort and independence. The past of Ireland was known to all; it was a tale of idleness, and poverty, and periodical insurrection. The present of Ireland was like the past, except that all its ordinary evils were exhibited in an aggravated form. But there were one or two points with regard to this subject to which he wished especially to ask the attention of the House. First, there was the effect which this state of things in Ireland had upon certain districts in England. In many of the towns of Lancashire, for example, there had been a great influx of Irish population, and although not a few of these persons were steady, respectable, and industrious, it was notorious that a portion of them were the opposite of this. Their influence on the native population was injurious, and crimes of violence had increased. Then there was another important point:

'Driven forth by poverty, Irishmen emigrate in great numbers, and in whatever quarter of the world an Irishman sets his foot, there stands a bitter, an implacable enemy of England. That is one of the results of the widespread disaffection that exists in Ireland. There are hundreds of thousands—I suppose there are millions—of the population of the United States of America who are Irish by birth, or by immediate descent; and be it remembered, Irishmen settled in the United States have a large influence in public affairs. They sometimes sway the election of members of the Legislature, and may even affect the election of the President of the Republic. There may come a time when questions of a critical nature will be agitated between the Governments of Great Britain and the United States; and it is certain that at such a time the Irish in that country will throw their whole weight into the scale against this country, and against peace with this country. These are points which it is necessary to consider, and which arise out of the lamentable condition in which Ireland is placed.'

Mr. Bright thought that both the Government and the people of Ireland were at fault. Governments generally had been negligent of Ireland. Difficulties arose, too, from the constitution of the Government. Both Houses of Parliament were almost exclusively aristocratic, and the Administration was necessarily the same. The condition of Ireland required two kinds of remedies—one political, the other social. With regard to the first, three-fourths of the Irish people had a total disbelief in the honesty and integrity of the Government of the country, and to remove this feeling some great measure or measures must be offered to them—measures which would act as a complete demonstration that bygones were to be bygones, and that henceforth new, generous, and equal principles of government were to be adopted. Then, too, there must be equality between the great religious sects in Ireland—between Catholic and Protestant. It was impossible that this equality could be much longer denied. There was a rumour that Government intended bringing forward a proposition for paying the Roman Catholic priests of Ireland; but it would be much more in accordance with political justice, and with the true interests of religion, to withdraw the Church Establishment from Ireland, and thus bring about perfect equality.

Having thus advocated Disestablishment nearly twenty years before the passing of Mr. Gladstone's great measure, Mr. Bright went on to say, with regard to the Parliamentary representation of Ireland, that from the experience of seventy-three days which he had spent in an examination of the subject whilst serving as a member of the Dublin Election Committee, he asserted most distinctly that such representation as existed was a fraud. He was quite confident that next session the questions of religious equality in Ireland and of Irish representation must receive a much more serious attention than they had obtained in any past session. The social remedies which were immediately possible were those having reference to the mode in which the land of Ireland was held and cultivated. 'It is a notorious fact that there are vast tracts of land in Ireland which, if left in the hands of nominal and bankrupt owners, will never, to the end of time, support the population which ought to live upon them. And it is on this ground that I must question the policy of measures for expending public money with a view to the cultivation and reclamation of these lands.' The true solution of the matter was to get the lands out of the hands of men who were the nominal and not the real possessors. Mr. Bright again referred

to the evils of entail and primogeniture, and closed with this appeal:—

'You have toiled at this Irish difficulty session after session, and some of you have grown almost from boyhood to grey-headed old men since it first met you in your legislative career; and yet there is not in ancient or modern history a picture so humiliating as that which Ireland presents to the world at this moment.

'Let the House, if it can, regard Ireland as an English country. Let us think of the eight millions of people, and of the millions of them doomed to this intolerable suffering. Let us think of the half-million who, within ten years past, have perished miserably in the workhouses, and on the highways, and in their hovels—more, far more, than ever fell by the sword in any war this country ever waged. Let us think of the crop of nameless horrors which is even now growing up in Ireland, and whose disastrous fruit may be gathered in years and generations to come. Let us examine what are the laws and the principles under which alone God and nature have permitted that nations should become industrious and provident.

'I hope the House will pardon me if I have said a word that can offend any one. But I feel conscious of a personal humiliation when I consider the state of Ireland. I do not wish to puff nostrums of my own, though it may be thought I am opposed to much that exists in the present order of things; but whether it tended to advance democracy, or to uphold aristocracy, or any other system, I would wish to fling to the winds any prejudice I have entertained, and any principle that may be questioned, if I can thereby do one single thing to hasten by a single day the time when Ireland shall be equal to England in that comfort and that independence which an industrious people may enjoy, if the Government under which they live is equal and just.'

Mr. Scrope's motion was eventually negatived without a division.

The Government introduced several Irish measures in the session of 1849, the chief of which was a proposition by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for a Rate in Aid. It was during the debate on the bill founded upon Sir Charles Wood's resolution that Mr. Bright delivered one of the greatest of his many elaborate speeches on Irish questions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer first proposed that a sum of £50,000 should be granted to certain Irish unions in which distress was more than usually prevalent. He further proposed that in each of the two following years there should be paid by every union in Ireland a sum equal to the rate of sixpence in the pound on each electoral division in such union, towards a general fund for the relief of the poor in Ireland and that the sum should be applied in such manner as Parliament might direct. The second reading of the bill founded on these resolutions was moved on the 27th of March, and the debate was prolonged till the 3d of April, when the second reading was carried by 193 to 138. The third reading, which was also opposed, was carried on the 30th of April, and the bill subsequently passed the House of Lords.

Mr. Bright opened the third night's debate on the second reading. He began by justifying the proposed rate, not on the ground of the necessity of the case, but on the ground that Great Britain had already paid its rate in and on account of Ireland to an amount greater than the sum now proposed to be levied from Ireland herself. This the hon. member conclusively showed by poor-rate statistics drawn from Glasgow and Manchester. The latter town had suffered severely, yet had uttered no loud or clamorous complaints respecting the excessive burden borne by them for the support of the Irish. Seeing that all the English manufacturing towns had paid no small sums for Irish paupers, he did think that the landowners and persons of property in Ireland should make an effort during a temporary period to supply that small sum which the present bill demanded from them. As to the objections entertained against the measure by the proprietors of Ulster, if the bill could succeed in making Ulster a part of Ireland in interests and sympathies, it would be attended with a very happy result, and one that would compensate for some portion of the present misfortunes of Ireland. Ulster men had stood in the way of improvements in the franchise, in the Church, and in the land question; they had purchased Protestant ascendency, and the price paid for it was the ruin and degradation of their country.

With regard to the proposal emanating from certain quarters to substitute an income-tax for the purpose for which the rate was intended, Mr. Bright said he was averse to this proposition; he had insuperable objections to raising an income-tax for the support of the poor. But had such a tax been proposed, he was certain that it would have been opposed as much as the rate in aid had been, and, in his judgment, opposed on much better grounds. Looking at the general question, in its connection with the whole state of Ireland, he was led to think that either the malady of that country was incurable, or that there was a great lack of statesmen in the House. Ireland had for ages been entirely governed through its landlords. The pernicious principle on which it had been ruled through them was still in practical operation. The pivot on which the Government of Ireland had turned, and on which it still continued to revolve, was that of force and alms. They had 50,000 armed men in that country, to keep the people down; and they were annually voting away large sums of money to keep them up,—in other words, to keep them alive. He presumed that government by troops was easy, and that the

'Civil power may snore at ease,
While soldiers fire—to keep the peace.'

Tried by its fruits, this system was a palpable failure. And what alterations in the system were now proposed with a view to better results? As a measure for the regeneration of Ireland, the Poor Law had proved a complete failure, and so would the rate in aid. Something more was necessary—something which, instead of dealing with its mere symptoms, would attack the disease at its very root. At present, the rich were menaced with ruin, and the poor with starvation. The speaker then gave the following terrible picture of the condition of Ireland:—

'On looking over the reports of the Poor Law Inspectors, I find them teeming with statements of the wretchedness which prevails in the distressed districts of Ireland. The general character of the reports is that starvation is, literally speaking, gradually driving the population into their graves. Many cannot quit their hovels for want of clothing, whilst others cannot be discharged from the workhouses owing to the same cause. Men are seen wearing women's apparel, not being able to procure proper clothing; whilst, in other instances, men, women, and children are all huddled together under bundles of rags, unable to rise for lack of covering; workhouses and prisons are crowded beyond their capacity to contain, the mortality being very great in them. Persons of honest character commit thefts in order to be sent to prison, and some ask, as a favour, to be transported.

'I know of nothing like this in the history of modern times. The only parallel I can find to it is in the work of the great German author, Mosheim, who, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, speaking of the inroads of the barbarians into the Roman empire in the fifth century, says that in Gaul the calamities of the times drove many to such madness that they wholly excluded God from the government of the world, and denied His providence over human affairs. It would almost appear that this state of things is now to be seen in Ireland. The prisons are crowded, the chapels deserted, society is disorganized and ruined; labour is useless, for capital is not to be had for its employment. The reports of the Inspectors say that this catastrophe has only been hastened, and not originated, by the failure of the potato crop during the last four years, and that all men possessed of any intelligence must have foreseen what would ultimately happen.'

Mr. Bright next referred to the radical improvements required with regard to the titles and transfer of lands. Extravagance and the prevalence of life interests in property were also sources of evil in Ireland. Asking what the noble lord at the head of the Government had done towards grappling with these evils, he answered—Nothing, absolutely nothing. He held that the Government was highly reprehensible in not having come forward with some large and earnest measures for the regeneration of Ireland. The plan proposed by Sir Robert Peel with regard to the land and other matters was in its main features admirable, although he was inclined to regard it as a

little vague in the shape in which it had been proposed. The right hon. baronet seemed to shrink from throwing a great deal of Irish land at once into the market, as such a course would lower its price. But he could assure the right hon. baronet that neither Englishmen nor Scotchmen would invest their capital in Irish land unless it were very cheap. Mr. Bright then proceeded to review the whole system of real property tenure in Ireland, inveighing against the strict and cumbrous system of entails existing in that country, against the law of primogeniture and its consequences, against the complicated titles, and the pride and extravagance of the Irish gentry. He suggested reforms in all these directions, and when told that he was interfering with property, he asked what value Ireland was now, while the property in labour of four million persons was almost totally destroyed? In the state of the land question lay the real difficulty of the country. They must free the land, and facilitate its transfer, ere they could hope to effect anything like a permanent regeneration of Ireland. To do so was no doubt somewhat difficult; but there were modes in which it might speedily be done.

'If ever there were an opportunity for a statesman,' said Mr. Bright, 'it is this. This is the hour undoubtedly, and we want the man.' He feared whether he was on the Treasury bench, but the character of the Government was at stake, and it could not remain inactive. Having alluded to the great subscription raised for Ireland three years before, when contributions came from all parts of the globe, the hon. member concluded with this eloquent peroration:—

'Hon. gentlemen turn with triumph to neighbouring countries, and speak in glowing terms of our glorious constitution. It is true that abroad thrones and dynasties have been overturned, whilst in England peace has reigned undisturbed. But take all the lives that have been lost in the last twelve months in Europe amidst the convulsions that have occurred—take all the cessation of trade, the destruction of industry, all the crushing of hopes and hearts, and they will not compare for an instant with the agonies which have been endured by the population of Ireland under your glorious constitution. And there are those who now say that this is the ordering of Providence. I met an Irish gentleman the other night, and, speaking upon the subject, he said that he saw no remedy, but that it seemed as if the present state of things were the mode by which Providence intended to solve the question of Irish difficulties. But let us not lay these calamities at the door of Providence; it were sinful in us, of all men, to do so. God has blessed Ireland—and does still bless her—in position, in soil, in climate; He has not withdrawn his promises, nor are they unfulfilled; there is still the sunshine and the shower, still the seedtime and the harvest; and the affluent bosom of the earth yet offers sustenance for man. But man must do his part—we must do our part—we must retrace our steps—we must shun the blunders, and, I would even say, the crimes of our past legislation. We must free the land; and then we shall dis-

cover, and not till then, that industry, hopeful and remunerated—industry, free and inviolate, is the only sure foundation on which can be reared the enduring edifice of union and peace.'

This speech marked Mr. Bright's advancement into the highest rank of Parliamentary orators and debaters. At its close, cheers burst forth spontaneously from all parts of the House, Conservatives vieing with Liberals in their appreciation of the eloquence which had deeply moved the entire chamber. Mr. Disraeli, who spoke on the same evening, said that although he agreed with Mr. Bright as little as with any member in the House, he had listened to his speech with pleasure and gratification, as he must to every demonstration which sustained the reputation of that assembly.

Before the House met in the following session, viz., 1850, Mr. Bright paid a visit to Ireland. In the questions which subsequently arose in Parliament relating to the distressed unions, the elective franchise, etc., he took a lively interest, pointing out defects in the various measures introduced, although not addressing the House at any length upon the general question of Ireland. On the subject of the franchise, however, he spoke very emphatically, and said he should feel ashamed to own himself a citizen of this country did he believe it possible that, for any length of time, it could be tolerated that six men out of seven should be shut out from the ordinary exercise of the common right of the franchise. The Government Bill for the extension of the Irish Parliamentary franchise was carried this year, having been first subjected to considerable revision in the House of Lords. There were three important points in the measure, however, when it finally became law—namely, it fixed the franchise for Irish counties at £12, instituted a poor-law valuation, and required the payment of poor-rates as the only test of qualification. This Act increased the number of electors in the counties from 27,000 to 135,000.

Mr. Bright made some important references to the Irish Church during a debate which occurred in the session of 1853, on a motion by Mr. G. H. Moore for a select committee to inquire into the ecclesiastical revenues of Ireland, with the view of ascertaining how far they were made applicable to the benefit of the Irish people. Lord John Russell delivered a speech on this motion which was very illiberal as compared with his previous utterances on the question, and one which greatly exasperated the Roman Catholics and the Nonconformists. Mr. Bright expressed the sorrow with which he had listened to the noble lord's address, and proceeded to contrast his lordship's

past career with his present, when he was cheered by those who sat opposite, and listened to in silence by those who sat behind him. With regard to the general question, he (Mr. Bright) said that if this kingdom of Great Britain, powerful in population, in wealth, and in the combination of all its people, were to inflict upon a smaller island and its smaller population a great injustice like the Irish Church, and to maintain that injustice on the ground that it would affect some of the institutions of this country, were he an Irishman, nothing but the impracticability of carrying the proposition would for one single moment keep him from being as zealous a repealer of the Union as that island had ever produced. At the present moment it was impossible for any impartial person to travel through Ireland and not perceive that there was one question which poisoned all the social relations of that country. Whether in the elections, or in any other matter, political or social, this one question of the Church Establishment was the pestilent and poisonous question in Ireland, and made it as impossible now as for the last two hundred years that that country should be in the possession of tranquillity and contentment. He advised the Irish Liberal members to make this question of religious equality in Ireland the cardinal question in their political movements. Were he a Roman Catholic, he would not come into that House and let any occasion slip of denouncing the insult offered to his Church and his country. There was goodness and there was greatness enough in the people of this country yet to consent to a measure of full justice to Ireland.

Although Mr. Moore's motion was rejected by a large majority, this stirring and uncompromising language on the part of the member for Manchester must have greatly fluttered and discomposed the occupants of the Treasury bench, most of whom felt that there were striking anomalies in connection with the Irish Church. Mr. Bright was accurate in his reading of the people of England, but they required to be acted upon yet more strongly before this great act of reparation could be achieved.

Towards the close of 1849, Mr. Bright advocated the claims of Ireland at a great meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. He showed that for thirty years past the imperial Legislature had had laid before it, time after time, a statement of the actual condition of the Irish people; and he brought it as a serious charge against the constitution of the country—against the aristocratic form of our government—that all these statements had passed unregarded, and that the condition of

Ireland had scarcely, until recently, excited any real solicitude on the part of either the Ministry or Parliament.

Mr. Bright has never used soft words or delusive phrases when it has seemed necessary to him to speak out, but his address on this occasion—by its very outspokenness—drew upon him the vials of wrath from a not uninfluential portion of the press. He was charged with fostering that want of self-reliance which had always been complained of as lacking in the Irish people; whereas his only object had been to take away from those who had done evil to Ireland that subterfuge under which they had constantly sheltered themselves, viz., that there was something in the race and religion of Irishmen which made it impossible for their country to prosper.

The hon. gentleman's advocacy of the cause of Ireland, however, and his steadfast devotion to its interests, was warmly appreciated by the vast body of Irish residents in Manchester and Salford; and by these he was presented with an address in the Manchester Corn Exchange, on the 4th of January, 1850. The address expressed the deep gratitude of the Irish residents, and expressed a hope that Mr. Bright might be enabled still further to brighten the path to Ireland's prosperity and England's glory. Mr. Bright delivered a lengthy speech in reply, recapitulating his previous suggestions and recommendations for a settlement of the most pressing of Irish grievances. The labourers and the peasantry of Ireland were almost gone—they were either dead, or in America, or in the workhouse. Irishmen had no country; and his propositions went to give them a country. The proposal which had been made in certain quarters to re-enact the Corn Laws surpassed in audacity any other made by those who professed to seek the welfare of Ireland. It was made by a body of coroneted conspirators against the food and the industry of the people of the United Kingdom. Having dwelt at length upon the necessity for land reform, religious equality, and a further extension of the suffrage, he thus recapitulated the three branches of remedies which he considered necessary for the welfare of Ireland: the economical, which took in the question of the land and the security of the tenantry—all those points which could be said to affect the industrial and social condition of the people; the political, affecting the franchise and the representation; and the ecclesiastical, which involved such a change as to place all the religious sects of Ireland upon a platform of perfect equality before the law. 'I hope,' said Mr. Bright, in conclusion, 'that Lord John Russell may rise to the great

work that is before him. He has an opportunity of doing more for this country than almost any other Minister in our time. He might, I believe, add the industry and affections of millions to the wealth and strength of this great empire. But if he should fail—if he should prove himself to be the agent of a timid and selfish oligarchy, rather than the Prime Minister of the Crown and of the people—if he shall not dare to do these things which in my conscience I believe he knows to be necessary,—even then we will not despair; for, as I said, there is growing up in England, and I hope in Ireland, a party so strong and numerous, that by-and-by it will leave out only the pauperism at one end of the scale, and, it may be, the titled and the privileged at the other; it will include almost the whole people; it will urge upon Government—united as we shall be with the people of Ireland—these great questions which I have discussed to-night. If the aristocracy of the United Kingdom has heaped evils unnumbered upon Ireland, why, I ask, should not the intelligent and virtuous people of the United Kingdom make them an ample restitution? And when I speak to that great party throughout this country, I would say that in all their struggles, whatsoever they may undertake, whatsoever they may accomplish, they cannot do a nobler or better thing than to consecrate the cause of their advancing liberties by glorious and fruitful labour for the regeneration of Ireland.'

One more deliverance on Irish questions at this juncture must be noticed. On the 25th of October, 1852, Mr. Bright addressed an important letter to Dr. Gray—afterwards Sir John Gray, M. P.—proprietor of the *Freeman's Journal*. As Mr. Thorold Rogers has observed, the estimate of the property of the Irish Church given in this letter was too low, but it does not affect the argument, or the principle of the proposed arrangement. The document was penned in view of a conference which the friends of religious equality in Ireland were about to hold in Dublin, with the object of considering the existing ecclesiastical arrangements of the country. Taking the keenest interest in this question, and being unable to be present at the deliberations of the Conference—if, indeed, the invitations had extended beyond Irishmen and Irish representatives—Mr. Bright had adopted this course to make his opinions known.

He began by observing that the case of the Catholic population of Ireland was so strong, so unanswerable, and so generally admitted, that nothing was wanting to ensure its complete success but the combination of a few able and honest men to

concentrate and direct existing opinion. If such men could be found—resolute, persevering, and disinterested—a great work was before them; they would meet with insult and calumny in abundance; but having a right cause, and working it with right means, they would certainly succeed. Mr. Bright went on to assume that perfect religious equality would be demanded; in fact, on this point there should be no possibility of mistake; the demand for equality must be unequivocal, and it was most desirable that some mode of attaining it should be distinctly pointed out. Lord John Russell and Lord Grey, seeing the enormous evil of the existing system, were ready to justify almost any measure that promised political and ecclesiastical equality to the Irish Catholics; but they wished that equality to be obtained without the subversion of the Protestant Established Church in Ireland. But to have two Established Churches in Ireland, the one Protestant and the other Catholic; to have in the House of Lords Protestant and Catholic bishops, elbowing each other on the 'right reverend bench,' guarding 'the temporal and spiritual interests of two Churches which denounce each other as idolatrous or heretical, would be an inconsistency so glaring that it would go far to overthrow all reverence for Governments or Churches, if not for Christianity itself. The scheme is surely too absurd to be seriously thought of; and if there be a statesman bold enough to propose it, he will find no support in the opinion of the English public, except from that small section with whom religion goes for nothing, and Churches and priests are tolerated as machinery in the pay and service of the Government.'

There was one equality, however, that would be received with general favour, and that was one starting from the point that henceforth there must be no Church in Ireland in connection with the State. But there would still arise with this the question of the appropriation of the large funds then in the hands of the Irish Established Church. Mr. Bright next detailed his own scheme for the appropriation of these funds. He proposed the establishment of a Church property commission, authorized to appropriate the £10,000,000 of Church property in certain proportions among the Established, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic Churches. In dividing the sum he would appropriate so much of it to the Roman Catholics as would provide a small piece of land in every parish—say from ten to twenty acres—in the possession of the Catholic Church, to be made over absolutely and for ever to the Catholics of Ireland. Under an arrangement of this kind, of course the

special grant to the College of Maynooth would be withdrawn. In their turn, the Presbyterians would resign the *Regium Donum*, and receive instead such a portion of the general fund, absolutely and for ever, as would produce a revenue equal to the Parliamentary grant. Similarly he would treat the Protestant Episcopalians; giving them absolutely a sum about equal to that bestowed on the others, together with the privilege of possessing their churches at a nominal rent, so long as there should be a congregation. Thus he would have exhausted three out of the ten millions to be allotted. The remaining five or seven millions, as the case might be, could, and in his opinion should, be reserved for purposes strictly Irish, and directed to the educational and moral improvement of the people, without respect to class or creed.

Meeting a possible objection that his suggestions were contrary to his own well-known views on the subject of religious equality, Mr. Bright said,—

'From Scotland, and probably from certain quarters in England, we may hear of the great crime of handling over £1,000,000 sterling to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. It will, perhaps, be insisted upon, that to add to the means of a Church whose teaching is held to be "erroneous" is a grievous national sin; and many will honestly doubt the wisdom of a scheme which proposes such an appropriation of a portion of a great public fund. Now, there is not a man in the United Kingdom more averse to religious endowment by the State than I am. I object to the compulsory levying of a tax from any man to teach any religion, and still more to teach a religion in which he does not believe; and I am of opinion that to take a Church into the pay of the State, and to place it under the control of the State, is to deaden and corrupt the Church, and to enlist its influence on the side of all that is evil in the civil government. But in the plan now suggested the Irish sects or Churches would be left entirely free as in the Free Church in Scotland, or the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England. The grants once made, each Church would possess absolutely its own funds, just as much as if they were the accumulations of the voluntary contributions and liberality of past generations of its members, and thus would be avoided the damage to religion and to civil government which is inseparable from what is called the union of Church and State; whilst the sum granted to each Church, being equal to a provision of about £40,000 per annum, would be too small to create any important corporate influence adverse to the public interest.'

The writer looked for objections to his scheme. The grievance was centuries old, and around it were entwined interests, prejudices, fanaticism, animosities, and convictions. It was a desperate evil, and whoever waited till the remedy was pleasant to everybody would wait for ever. The object in view was the tranquillity of Ireland, and the means were simple. Being neither Roman Catholic, Protestant Episcopalian, nor Presbyterian, nor an Irishman, his own interest in the matter was not local or sectarian. He had endeavoured to study it,

and to regard it as became an Englishman loving justice and freedom, anxious for the tranquillity of Ireland, the welfare of the empire, and the honour of the Imperial Government.

'Some experience and much reflection,' Mr. Bright added, 'have convinced me that all efforts on behalf of industry and peace in Ireland will be in great part unavailing until we eradicate the sentiment which is universal among her Catholic population—that the Imperial Government is partial, and that to belong to the Roman Catholic Church is to incur the suspicion or the hostility of the law. A true "equality" established among the Irish sects would put an end to this pernicious but all-pervading sentiment; and Catholics, whether priests or laymen, would feel that the last link of their fetters was at length broken. Supremacy on the one hand, and a degrading inferiority on the other, would be abolished, and the whole atmosphere of Irish social and political life would be purified. Then, too, Christianity would appeal to the population, not as a persecuting or a persecuted faith, with her features disfigured by the violence of political conflict, but radiant with the divine beauty which belongs to her, and speaking with irresistible force to the hearts and consciences of men. I know not if the statesman be among us who is destined to settle this great question; but whoever he may be, he will strengthen the monarchy, earn the gratitude of three kingdoms, and build up for himself a lasting renown.'

The position assumed in Mr. Bright's letter, that the Irish Church was an anomaly and an iniquity, was not denied, or at least only by interested bodies. As was said at the time, the Church was in the position of the *Rois Fainéans* of the Merovingian race in France, who were universally recognized as an evil, but who maintained their position simply because, before an experiment was made, no one could calculate the consequences of getting rid of them. The difficulty was a practical one, and one of great magnitude. Nevertheless, the statesman was living who actually brought the Irish Church question to an issue and a settlement some years later, though not, as regards details, on the lines indicated by Mr. Bright. But perfect religious equality was achieved, and Mr. Bright could little have anticipated that he would be a member of the Government which, under Mr. Gladstone's guidance, accomplished the task.

CHAPTER X.

GENERAL LEGISLATION—1846–53.

Mr. Bright on Questions of General Legislation.—Factory Labour.—Lord Ashley's Ten Hours' Bill.—Arguments of Mr. Bright and his Friends.—The Factory Acts of 1847 and 1850.—Flogging in the Army.—Lord John Russell's Education Scheme of 1847.—It is opposed by Mr. Bright.—His Speeches on the Cultivation of Cotton in India.—Excessive Public Expenditure.—Mr. Cobden's Motion thereon.—The Hastings-Cobden Correspondence.—Mr. Bright attacks the Derby Government of 1852.—Further Speeches on Free Trade and Protection.—Capital Punishment.—Evidence on the Game Laws.—Bill for their Repeal introduced.—The Burdens on Land.—Mr. Disraeli's Proposal to relieve the Landowners.—It is opposed by Mr. Bright, and defeated.—Second Resolution on Agricultural Distress.—It is lost by a narrow majority.—Mr. Hume's Bill to Amend the National Representation.—Supported by Mr. Bright.—The County Franchise.—Lord John Russell's Reform Bill of 1852—The Ballot.—Mr. Bright on Church Rates.—Taxes on Knowledge and the Freedom of the Press.—Speeches of Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden.—Government Defeat on the Advertisement Duty.—Mr. Bright on Parliamentary Oaths.—The case of Alderman Salomons.—Papal Aggression.—Mr. Bright eloquently opposes the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill.—Public Addresses at Manchester and other places.—Mr. Bright invited to stand for Rochdale.—The Kossuth Reception at Manchester.—Defence of 'the Manchester Party.'—Mr. Bright at Belfast.—The Manchester Election of 1852.—Mr. Bright on the War Panic of 1853.

During the earlier years of his Parliamentary career—that is, when he was in the prime of his physical strength—the member for Manchester furnished abundant evidence of the deep interest he took in all great public questions. As one proof of this, we find that in the period above-named, the eight years extending from 1846 to 1853 inclusive, he addressed the House on no fewer than forty-four occasions, all in connection with subjects of moment. Most of these speeches were of considerable length, and many of them were of representative importance And in these addresses we take here no note of the many Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary speeches Mr. Bright delivered in the course of the year 1846 on the Free Trade question.

The session of 1846 had scarcely opened when the subject of factory labour was again brought before the House of Commons. The large party in favour of a reduction in the hours of labour included very heterogeneous elements. Those like Lord Ashley, who least understood the question from its prac-

tical point of view, but were yet the most numerous body in favour of reduction, were perhaps the most sincere in their advocacy. There were some, too, like John Fielden and Richard Oastler, who were also sincere, but few in numbers; while there were others who regarded factory legislation as a kind of retaliation upon the manufacturers for the powerful part they had played in the Free Trade campaign. Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Mr. Joseph Hume, and those who thought with them, opposed compulsory measures in connection with the hours of labour from the standpoint of free trade. The workman had the utmost right of freedom in this respect, and they claimed that any alteration of the hours of labour ought to be left for settlement as between employer and employed. The Protectionists, of course, threw in their influence with those who were in favour of compulsory legislation, and against the Free-traders; and there were many Radicals who, on grounds of supposed humanitarianism, followed the same course.

On the 29th of January, 1846, Lord Ashley brought in his bill for limiting the hours of labour of young persons in factories to ten hours. Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, did not oppose the introduction of the bill, although he intimated that no decision with respect to the Corn Laws could ever alter his opinion with regard to the propriety of interfering with adult labour in the manufacturing districts. Mr. Hume contended that industry and capital ought to be free, and the real effect of Lord Ashley's measure would be to throw large numbers of men out of employment, for their labour was dependent upon that of the children. Mr. Bright said they were all anxious that the labouring population should work less, and have better wages; but the noble lord looked at one side of the question, and attributed evils to the working of mills which in reality arose from the circumstance of large towns and the labourers being left by their more powerful neighbours in a state of very great neglect. These evils were now diminishing, and there was a unanimous endeavour to improve as far as possible the condition of factory workers. He did not believe that a majority of the working classes were in favour of the proposed measure; but he believed that a large number were in favour of it, and he was extremely sorry to give his vote or to speak in opposition to the wishes of a number of honest men. He did not oppose a reduction in the hours of labour, which he believed would come with greater prosperity, and a feeling of harmony between masters and workmen, but he did oppose this compulsory bill.

The favourite argument of the promoters of the Ten Hours' Bill, that as much could be earned in ten hours as in twelve, was strongly combated by Mr. Bright in the debate on the second reading. But even if it were so, the loss of two hours' pay would be a more serious injury than the saving of two hours' work. In the cotton districts, people were generally paid by the piece, and how then could such legislation affect them favourably, so far as wages were concerned? The speed of machinery could not be increased so as to make up the difference in time lost. He reiterated his conviction that when the free-trade measures of the Government were carried out, and the manufacturers became actuated, as they would be, by feelings more and more kindly towards their workpeople, all that they could hope to achieve by the bill would be attained by voluntary arrangement, and without the mischief that invariably attended the interference of the Legislature in such questions.

Lord Ashley's bill was lost by a majority of ten; and those who have charged Mr. Bright with opposing this legislation from interested motives may be reminded that there also voted against Lord Ashley the following distinguished members, many of whom were well entitled to be considered the friends of the working classes: Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Bouverie, Dr. Bowring, Mr. Cobden, Sir A. Cockburn, Mr. J. Evelyn Denison, Mr. Goulburn, Sir J. Graham, Mr. Sidney Herbert, Mr. H. Labouchere, Mr. Fox Maule, Lord Morpeth, Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Ricardo, Sir F. Thesiger (Lord Chelmsford), and Mr. Walpole.

This measure for limiting the hours of labour in factories was reintroduced in the following session. During the debate on the second reading, Mr. Bright entered still more fully into the question, his speech being to some extent necessitated by the frequent allusions made to him. He said that he had lived all his life amid the population for whom they were called upon to legislate; that he had been largely, and was now very largely, connected with this particular trade; and that he had not a farthing in the world that was not invested in it. He had therefore a right to speak of the feelings and wishes of the working classes in Lancashire. But let it not be supposed for a moment—for he would deny it altogether—that in his opposition to this Ten Hours' Bill he was influenced by a belief that it would in any degree, if passed, injure his property or his personal prospects. If this measure were calculated to advance the interests of the twelve hundred thousand persons who were

more or less interested in the cotton trade, then his interests must be consulted in that which would advance the interests of by far the largest proportion of those who were in any way connected with those trades. The accusation of inhumanity he repelled, and reminded the House that already no child under thirteen was allowed to work more than six hours a day. The real object of the promoters of the measure was not to take care of children under eighteen, and women of all ages, but to interfere by law with the labour of all persons, of whatever age and whatever sex they might be, who were engaged in the manufactures of this country, and to give to all these classes that measure of legislative protection—he used the word protection in the sense in which it had been used by all who were in favour of monopolies—a protection that would diminish the hours of labour; while it would continue a rate of wages which, from the days of Sadler till the present time, was clearly a rate higher than labour in a free market could command.

Mr. Bright adduced evidence to prove the incorrectness of the statements respecting the unhealthiness of factory life. In the following passage he gave some interesting personal reminiscences, and then demonstrated the morality of the factory operatives:—

'The hon. member for Dorsetshire (Mr. Bankes) spoke of the impossibility of persons obtaining education under the system of twelve hours' labour. The hon. member should understand that he (Mr. Bright) was not defending the principle that these persons should work for twelve hours a day. He was merely meeting the argument which had been advanced in favour of the bill. Did the hon. member for Dorsetshire forget that those children did not work more than six hours a day until they were thirteen years old? For himself, he could say that he had never been at school after he was fifteen years of age. It was true there were, no doubt, many things which hon. members knew or learned by remaining at college until they were twenty or twenty-one, of which he was ignorant; but still, he considered his own case to be in some degree a proof that a man might get some education by remaining at school only until he was fifteen, and that he might do something by remaining there even if he was thirteen. But what could be more ludicrous than to say that a person could get no education under thirteen? The old system was to bind apprentices at the age of fourteen; but he would maintain that the degree of education among factory labourers was not inferior to that to be found among all other classes of this country. He had no doubt whatever but that their consumption of books, their purchase of newspapers, and their general devotion to literature, which the present age afforded so many opportunities of encouraging, was as pure and as extensive at least as that of any other class of the labouring population of Great Britain. If the hon. gentleman the member for Dorsetshire was not yet convinced on this point, he would beg to bring before him the evidence of the Rev. Mr. Clay, who had compiled a list of the extent of criminality existing in various classes in Lancashire. He began with No. 1, and went up to No. 20, the first number showing the class among which crime was highest, and the last the class in which there was the smallest number of criminals. Now, No. 19 in that list was the class of do-

mestic servants, and No. 20 was that of the female operatives in factories, while No. 1 was the class of grooms and coachkeepers, persons who were much more extensively employed by members of that House than by cotton spinners. Now, if the factory labourers were not the sober and orderly class of persons of which the noble lord (Lord John Manners) had spoken, he believed Mr. Clay would not have produced evidence like this. He believed there was not a magistrate in the manufacturing districts who would not bear testimony to the good conduct of these persons, and to the fact that their good behaviour even exceeded that of other classes in the same counties.'

Mr. Bright then dealt with the question of wages, and also with the decrease in the consumption of raw material in connection with the various manufactures of the country, which must take place if this bill is passed. He produced statistics bearing upon these questions; and he maintained that Parliament had no business to interfere with the workman's right to labour. To show that capitalists were not unmindful of the interests of their workpeople, he mentioned that in the factory with which he was himself connected they had a large infant school, together with a reading-room and news-room, and a school for adults, where the workmen attended after working hours. Not a few hundred pounds per annum was expended in promoting in this manner the interests of the workmen; and that, too, wholly independent of any act of Legislature. This was the case at many other manufactories; and he warned the House that by arming the workmen against the capitalists, as in the proposed legislation, it would be impossible that a friendly mutual feeling could continue. He blamed the Government for leaving this subject an open one, and not making it a Cabinet question.

The fates were against Mr. Bright, however, for before the close of the session the bill passed both Houses and became law. It was due to the subject of our biography that his position on a much-debated question should be stated with some fulness, and in his own language. His arguments were certainly endorsed by the best political economists of the day, as well as by a large section of the intelligent men of both political parties. It is further due to Mr. Bright to state that in 1855, when Mr. Cobbett unsuccessfully attempted to reopen the question of factory labour, and to legislate upon it, Mr. Bright, in opposing the hon. member, said that although he had been a strong opponent of the existing law, he would not be the man to move or second any motion having for its object to disturb the duration of labour fixed upon by the bill of 1850. The Legislature had decided the question, and there he would leave it. The bill of 1850 was introduced and passed to give effect to the provisions of the Act of 1847.

So early as 1846 Mr. Bright was one of a small minority who were in favour of the abolition of flogging in the army. When Dr. Bowring divided the House on the question, and delivered an able speech in behalf of his motion, he was supported by Mr. Bright. The latter referred to the treatment to which soldiers were subjected by their officers—treatment such as flesh and blood could not stand. He also explained the reasons why the calling of a common soldier was regarded as a degrading one. In the manufacturing districts, when a man had run through every kind of vice he became a soldier, and it was mentioned as a culminating fact in his career that such an one had enlisted. The reason why they could never get any but the lowest of the people was that there was not a warlike spirit in England. There was a commercial spirit in England, and the people found the means of a more profitable and honourable existence in the walks of trade and commerce than in the gaudy trappings offered them in the service of the State. It was not to be expected that when a man could live comfortably in his own cottage, earning in an honourable way a subsistence for himself and his family, that he would become a soldier. He should rejoice to see the warlike spirit die away, and less occasion for armaments, and forces, and military displays, not to speak of those horrors by which the people of England had of late been excited.

But only thirty-seven members voted for the abolition of flogging, and the motion was lost by a majority of fifty-three.

When the Government scheme of education was unfolded by Lord John Russell in 1847, it was scarcely to be expected, seeing how distasteful were its provisions to the Nonconformists, that Mr. Bright could remain silent. Ministers proposed to act upon certain minutes of the Education Committee of the Privy Council by issuing grants of public money for the purposes specified. Roman Catholic schools were excluded from the grants. Other points of the Government plan will be apparent from the hon. member's reply.

Mr. Bright first strongly condemned the minutes, and then proceeded to reply to Mr. Macaulay's argument that the State was bound to educate the people. He utterly denied the truth of this position, remarking that it was strange that neither in past centuries nor in modern times had any statesman acted on such a principle. If it were a solemn duty to see that all the people were educated, then Government were obliged to enforce education. The object, tendency, and result of the present scheme was to give increased and enormous power to the

clergy of the Established Church—so had every step taken by the Government since 1839. The speaker then went on to show what had been done in the last few years by the voluntary system in England, Scotland, and Wales. Producing statistics in each case, he showed, particularly as regarded the last-named division of the empire, that where the Church had educated one child, the Dissenting Churches had educated from eight to ten. 'It is not because the Church of England receives money from this grant that Nonconformists object to the grant; but it is because Nonconformists themselves, in accordance with the principles by which they are so, cannot receive public money for the teaching of religion in their schools; and, therefore, they object to the State giving money as an advantage to the Church schools—an advantage by which they must profit, and which will certainly be most damaging to the Dissenting schools.'

Mr. Macaulay had charged the Nonconformists with abandoning the principles they once held dear; and he cited the example of the United States in the matter of education. Mr. Bright denied that a parallel existed. 'Give us, if you please, the state of things which exists in the United States, and particularly in the State of Massachusetts. Free us from the trammels of your Church—set religion apart from the interference of the State—if you will make public provision for education, let it not depend upon the doctrines of a particular creed—and then you will find the various sects in this country will be as harmonious on the question of education as are the people of the United States of America.' Nonconformists objected to any portion of the public money going to teachers of religion belonging either to the Established Church or to Dissenting bodies; they would not receive it themselves. Any Nonconformist who took one sixpence of this grant for the purpose of teaching the tenets of his particular sect could never afterwards, with any show of consistency and good faith, say one syllable against the domination and usurpation of the Established Church.

The Government had entered into overtures with the Wesleyans, who believed that the Roman Catholics were to be excluded from the grant; but if they were, he was reminded of the expression of a well-known writer:

> 'Ofttimes, the pleasure is as great
> Of being cheated as to cheat.'

A proposition to open these grants to all persons of all religious

persuasions whatsoever, he could have understood; but he was sorry that it had come to this. Apologizing if he had spoken with warmth, Mr. Bright added: 'Let it be remembered that I am avowedly a member of a Nonconformist body. My forefathers languished in prison by the acts of that Church which you now ask me to aggrandize. Within two years places of worship of that body to which I belong have been despoiled of their furniture to pay the salary of a minister of the Established Church; and when I look back and see how that Church has been uniformly hostile to the progress of public liberty, it is impossible for me to refrain from protesting against the outrages committed by the Government on the Nonconformist body for the sake of increasing the aggrandizements of a political institution, with which, as I hope and believe, the time is not far off when this country will dispense.'

The Government grant was eventually agreed to.

Reserving for later treatment, and in their proper order, Mr. Bright's more lengthy and comprehensive speeches on India, there are indications, in the sessions with which we are now dealing, that his attention was already closely directed to questions affecting our Indian possessions and their relations to this country. Thus, in May 1847, he moved for a select committee to inquire into the progress of the cultivation of cotton in India. In doing so, he said that what potatoes were to Ireland, cotton was to Lancashire; and that as in Ireland there had been a calamity unparalleled in consequence of the failure of the staple food of the people, so, if we could conceive the raw material of the cotton manufacture greatly to fail, we should see calamities overspread that country equal to, if not exceeding, that which had overtaken the population of Ireland. The Lancashire cotton famine, many years subsequently, verified to the letter these prophetic words. Mr. Bright brought forward figures upon the growth of cotton in various parts of the world. The East India Company, he said, had failed in promoting the cultivation of cotton, and he wanted a committee to ascertain why they had failed. His language was equally significant and far-seeing as regarded America. Reminding the House that the whole of the cotton grown in America was produced by slave labour, he affirmed that slavery would ultimately be abolished either by peaceable or by violent means; and an interruption to the production of cotton would be a calamity severely felt through the manufacturing districts of England.

Members being engaged in some occupation more pleasant to them than the discussion of this really momentous question,

and the Government and the India Company being opposed to it, the House was counted out during the debate that ensued on Mr. Bright's motion. In the year 1848, however, Mr. Bright obtained and presided over a committee to inquire into the obstacles which existed to the cultivation and growth of cotton in India. Subsequently, and as the result of this committee, on the 18th of June, 1850, the hon. member moved for a commission to proceed to India and investigate on the spot this question of the growth of cotton. It must appear, he said, of the first importance that the supply of raw material upon which an immense amount of capital was engaged, and upon the working up of which some two millions of the population obtained a livelihood, should not fail. It was a question not of local but of national importance. By statistics he showed how enormously the cotton industry in this country had grown, and repeated his previous arguments. Reviewing the history of the growth of cotton in India, he quoted authorities to prove that there was nothing in the character or social condition of the Indian people which would make it unreasonable in us to expect large supplies of cotton, the produce of their industry. But grievances required to be redressed, and measures adopted to further the prosperity of India. The population of India was helpless unless Parliament came forward to its relief.

Sir J. C. Hobhouse opposed the motion, alleging that all governors and other Indian officials were doing their duty in regard to the matters indicated, and that Lord Dalhousie would make good use of the continuance of peace to further the interests of India. The motion was negatived, Mr. Bright predicting that at no very distant period Parliament and the Government would be compelled to take up this question in a much more serious manner than they then seemed disposed to do. Three years later—that is, in 1853—he again drew attention to this matter, recapitulating his previous efforts in connection with it. After all that had been done in regard to India, the whole case of the condition of the native population was left untouched. It was essential, in order to form a fair judgment, that unbiassed and impartial witnesses should be examined before the committee then sitting. Having alluded to native petitions for inquiry, and the great urgency of the matter, he asked the Government whether their proposed measure for the future government of India was a temporary or permanent one; and if the former, for how many years it was intended to renew the present government. Lord John Russell made the stereotyped official reply that the Government

were considering their plans, and could not reveal them at that moment.

This question excited great interest out of the House, especially in Lancashire, whose interests were naturally bound up in the supply of cotton. On the 18th of January, 1850, a meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce was held, for the purpose of considering whether any course was open whereby enlarged commercial intercourse with India could be promoted, and especially whether an increased supply of cotton could be obtained. Mr. Bright spoke at some length, adducing indisputable evidence that there were abundant means in India, as regarded climate and soil and population, for the production of a large supply of cotton in that country. It was because there were some obstacles in the way, which were removable, that India did not supply England with cotton. Notwithstanding a memorial to the Prime Minister, and a petition to the House of Commons from the Manchester Chamber, the Government, as we have seen, declined to appoint a commission. On another occasion Mr. Bright said that the industry of Lancashire could never be secure while it was dependent upon one market for a supply of cotton. By steam navigation and other modes of transit they were brought within some thirty-six days of India, a country that used to be some six months' distance from Great Britain. Government had refused an inquiry, and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce were wisely sending out Mr. Mackay upon their own responsibility. This gentleman died before his work was completed, but his report showed that with regard to the district of Guzerat, from which the main portion of cotton comes, all that had been said with regard to the influence and neglect of the Government in regard to the cultivation of cotton in India was perfectly true. Commenting upon this, Mr. Bright remarked that until some emergency came which alarmed the whole Indian administration and involved the Government in the dangers which were ahead, he was not certain that they would get any attention paid to the question in Parliament.

In this matter, again, the hon. member's words were justified by the event.

Mr. Bright has repeatedly inveighed against an excessive public expenditure. Speaking on the Budget of 1848, and referring to the depressed condition of the country, he said, surely that was not the time when the military expenditure of the country should be increased for the purpose of meeting an imaginary enemy; and the proposed increase of taxes for such

a purpose was as unjustifiable as it was oppressive. He warned the Government that it had come in by accident, and might be destroyed by blunders. The noble lord (Russell) and his colleagues reminded him of the religious order of La Trappe, who were said to have employed themselves diligently in digging their own graves. If the Government supposed they could do in 1848, with respect to foreign affairs and warlike armaments, what was done thirty or forty years ago, they committed the most egregious blunder that statesmen were ever guilty of. A few days later, in a debate on the public expenditure, he protested against the constantly increasing military estimates. The House was aware that some years ago the Russians were expected in the Thames; and very soon afterwards there was an increase in the military expenses. After that, a French Prince wrote a very foolish pamphlet; and another increase followed that. The recent panic in the public mind had arisen from the fear that the taxation of the country was to be unnecessarily increased, at a time when the sufferings of the country were extraordinarily great. Again, on the 31st of March, when Mr. Hume proposed to reduce the number of the land forces from 113,847 to 100,000 men, Mr. Bright said the House might rest assured that sixty millions of taxation was an amount which could not be levied for any length of time from the people of this country without creating a deep and general feeling of dissatisfaction. To economy and retrenchment the Government would have at length to come. Nothing was done for Ireland, save that they were asked to vote millions of money to maintain a standing army there. "Yet in Ireland last year more of their fellow-subjects had died of positive starvation—yes, literally perished of famine and pestilence in their hovels, in the workhouses, or by the side of the highroads—than England had lost of her people in any war, ancient or modern, in which she had ever been engaged."

This question of public expenditure Mr. Bright again dealt with in February, 1849, when his friend Mr. Cobden brought forward a proposal for reducing the public disbursements by ten millions. There was a considerable feeling in the country that something should be done in this direction, and in consequence Associations for promoting the cause of Financial Reform had sprung up in London, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and other large towns. A severe attack upon Mr. Cobden was made by Mr. Herries, the member for Stamford. In commencing his speech, Mr. Bright defended Mr. Cobden, and drew a striking contrast between the representation of the West

Riding and of Manchester and that of Stamford, a small borough which was so much under the influence of a certain noble lord that a considerable portion of its inhabitants had prayed to be disfranchised. Coming to the general question, Mr. Bright referred to the contrast presented between the financial condition of England and America; the latter, notwithstanding the increase of its population and seaboard, increased neither its army nor its navy. England maintained more troops in Canada than the whole standing army of the United States. The Chancellor of the Exchequer well knew that this was entirely a question of pressure; the Government had considered how little reduction would suffice to take off the edge of agitation. The hon. member then smartly attacked the Protectionists, informing them that the farmers would soon discover the virtue of retrenchment, when they found it was the only source of a remission of taxation; and he called upon them to join the manufacturers in compelling the Government to make reductions. 'You vote millions here,' said Mr. Bright, 'as if they were nothing, or as if every country was a California, and that gold was not produced in this country by the sweat of millions of men, who are entitled to as just and merciful a consideration of their interests as the highest and wealthiest man in Parliament.' The reformers, of course, were in a minority, Mr. Cobden's motion being defeated by 275 to 78.

A curious correspondence took place between Mr. Cobden and Sir Thomas Hastings, of the Royal Navy, in December, 1850. This correspondence arose out of a reference which Mr. Bright made at the Peace Congress at Birmingham, in the previous month, to the evidence given by Sir Thomas before a Parliamentary Committee on Navy Estimates. Referring to the superstitious fear of a war with France, Mr. Bright observed that the only authority upon which a British admiral anticipated war was an idle story told by the Bishop of Madagascar. Appealed to for his authority, Mr. Bright gave Mr. Cobden, who was a member of the committee in question. Sir Thomas Hastings thereupon sent Mr. Cobden a challenge to a duel. The latter responded in a letter full of humour. 'If in my earlier days,' he wrote, 'my admiration for the genius of Sheridan had not tempted me to witness the mimic exploits of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, I might have been at a loss to comprehend the meaning of your letter. Aided, however, by my recollections of that model duellist, I understand you to propose that we should lay down our pens, and have a personal

interview, not to talk over the matter in dispute, not even to approach within speaking distance, but to take our stand at twelve paces apart, with pistols in hand, and endeavour to blow out each other's brains. Now, I am satisfied, without any such experiment on my head at least, that half an ounce of lead propelled by less than a quarter of an ounce of powder is quite sufficient to shatter the human skull to atoms, and extinguish in a moment all powers of reason, all sense of justice, and every religious sentiment. But how such a process could satisfy me that I had acted unjustly towards you, or convince you of the contrary, is, I confess, quite beyond my comprehension. So soon as I had recovered from the fit of laughter into which, I must own, your challenge threw me, and after I had mastered the temptation I felt to name for my second my much-esteemed friend Mr. Punch, I endeavoured to procure a copy of the report of the committee; and, having refreshed my memory by a perusal of your evidence, I will endeavour to state the facts of the case as between you and myself in such a way as shall admit of no further misapprehension.'

Mr. Cobden then proceeded to show that Mr. Bright was substantially accurate, the only matter needing correction being the substitution of the French Bishop of Japan for the Bishop of Madagascar. Mr. Bright had informed Sir Thomas Hastings that there were verbal inaccuracies in the report of his speech, and no doubt the whole thing could have been satisfactorily explained had a further opportunity been afforded Mr. Bright. 'You must, like all public men,' said Mr. Cobden in conclusion, 'expect that your conduct will be freely canvassed; and your fate will be a luckier one than that of most of us if you do not find yourself often misapprehended, and sometimes misrepresented. If, unable to restrain the ebullitions of an irascible temper, you must needs challenge a member of the Legislature to mortal combat, merely because another member is reported to have made a mistake in a single word in a speech of an hour's length, or because a reporter's pen may have slipped at a critical moment, then you have mistaken your vocation; and you would be consulting your own reputation, and the interest of the country, by retiring from the public service, and seeking security for your susceptible nerves within the inviolable precincts of your own domestic circle.' With this letter the correspondence ended, Sir Thomas Hastings discreetly refraining from pushing the matter further.

When the Derby Government came into office in March, 1852, and delayed appealing to the country, Mr. Bright severely

blamed them for not dissolving Parliament, and for attempting to conduct public business as the representatives of a minority. This forcible and vigorous speech was delivered during a debate on the Army Estimates. Alluding to the probable protectionist policy of the Government, he said, 'either you should recant your protectionist principles, or you should go to the constituencies, and let them decide the question, once for all. The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Disraeli), and the noble lord the First Minister (Lord Derby), have referred to the humble labours which you, as a Government, are willing to undertake. We have no objection to the humility of your tasks —we think there has been a sufficient humiliation in your labours while in opposition. But there is one humility I do hope you will not stoop to, and that is, the retaining office not only when you cannot carry your principles, but when you dare not even avow them.'

Mr. Bright was unusually incisive in this speech, every word of which told upon his opponents on the Treasury Bench. He showed that the representation of the country was in a bad state when a few little pocket boroughs could return the Tory Ministers. The President of the India Board (Mr. Herries) had really only one constituent at Stamford, viz., the Marquis of Exeter. The Colonial Secretary (Sir J. Pakington) had the good fortune to return himself; and, as might be expected, he lived in a state of unparalleled harmony with his constituency. He (Mr. Bright) warned hon. gentlemen opposite that if they attempted to carry out Protection they would see a tumult in this country compared with which that of 1832 was as a whisper to a whirlwind. If you are for Protection, and will not say so, then I tell you we will make war upon you. You said once you would break up an "organized hypocrisy." I say to you, we will try if we cannot break up a confederated imposture. And bad as the representation of this country is —and no one is more conscious of the faults of our representative system than I am—yet I am perfectly persuaded that if you will dissolve Parliament and go to the constituencies for any duty you like to name, large or small, upon corn, you will find that your ephemeral Government will be scattered to the winds; and that the united voices of the intelligent and free people of this country will condemn the policy you avowed in opposition, and upon the promise of which, to your deluded dupes, you have scrambled to your seats of power.' This language of powerful invective raised opposing shouts, the speaker being loudly applauded from the Liberal benches.

In the course of the debate on Ways and Means on the 20th of July, 1849, the question of Free Trade was raised and discussed. Mr. Bright emphatically stated that he was confirmed in his belief in the truth of the principles of Free Trade. It would be a consolation to him, as long as he lived, that he had been, in the smallest degree, instrumental in causing the adoption of those principles by the people and the Government of this country; and now, whatever poverty existed in the country, he never passed a man, woman or child, however poor, however wan, however suffering, but he felt a consolation that his voice had been raised against a system which had made them more poor, more wan, and more suffering; and he believed that, as the seasons passed over us, we should find there would be, on both sides of the House, and in every portion of the country, not only a general acquiescence in the principles of Free Trade, but a clinging to them so firmly that no political party would ever be able to change the policy which the House had so wisely adopted in 1846.

Directly or indirectly, the question of Free Trade came up in all the sessions with which we are at present concerned. For example, in 1848 the Government were desirous of giving a slight protection to the West India colonies in the matter of sugar, which was not sufficient for the Protectionists, and too much for the Free-traders. Mr. Bright accordingly moved an amendment that it was not expedient to make any alteration in the Sugar Duties Act of 1846. If the present bill were carried, the West Indians would come to Parliament again and again, and that very proposition would be their justification for every future demand. The people of the colonies wished to reserve to themselves the opportunity of imitating Mr. Dickens's Oliver Twist, who was said to have been always asking for more. There could be no doubt that to encourage the greatest possible consumption was the most likely means of delivering the colonists from their present embarrassed condition. The principle of Free Trade was agreed to in 1846 with regard to corn, sugar, and a great many articles of English manufacture; it was acted upon in accordance with the opinion of the vast majority of the British nation. Whether sound or not, at any rate let the principle have that trial which even its opponents said, being carried, it was right that it should have. The Government, however, prevailed, the amendment being negatived.

After the elections of 1852, the Conservative Government found that the result of their appeal to the country would not

justify them in attempting to reserve the policy of Free Trade. When the House met in November, Mr. Villiers brought forward the question in a series of resolutions pledging the House definitely to a Free Trade policy. The debates which arose were very protracted. Mr. Bright, in following the Chancellor of the Exchequer, delivered a lengthy speech. He confuted the leading feature of Mr. Disraeli's defence, that the Protectionist party had not attempted to unsettle the legislation of 1846. In proof of this, he referred to Mr. Grantley Berkeley's motion in 1850, to Sir John Pakington's exertions against Free Trade, and to the efforts of Mr. Herries to restore the Navigation Laws. Mr. Disraeli had attempted to show that Lord John Russell was no better than himself in regard to commercial policy, but such recriminations would not be allowed to supersede the real question in debate. The Protectionist party had appealed to the country, and lost the verdict. Should that verdict be now drawn up by one who had repudiated Free Trade, or by one who had consistently supported it? One resolution declared that the legislation of Sir R. Peel was wise, just, and beneficial—it established a principle; the amendment merely announced a fact. Mr. Bright next proceeded to show that the Corn Laws were not passed in 1815 to enable the landlords to bear the burdens on land, and that the farmers had now lost nothing by Free Trade which the improved condition of the country had not amply compensated. But he distrusted the sincerity of the recent ministerial professions; and to prove how large a party supporting Government entertained in July last strong opinions that Free Trade would be reserved, or some equivalent given in lieu of Protection, Mr. Bright cited extracts from the speeches delivered in different parts of the country by Protectionist members. The Marquis of Granby and other members had declared that they would ride the horse Protection as long as he was fit to go out with. The extracts read elicited continuous cheers and laughter. Having fully proved this part of his case, Mr. Bright turned upon his opponents, remarking that their whole agitation for six years had been, the first part of the time calumniation of Sir Robert Peel, and during the latter part demands for the Protection they had lost, or for some compensation in place of it. He asked the House now to sanction its own policy, to set its seal irrevocably on what it did in 1846, and by its vote to establish on a firm basis the charter of free industry to the people of this kingdom.

Ultimately, resolutions differing somewhat from those

drawn up by Mr. Villiers, but still resolutions emphatically sanctioning and endorsing a Free-trade policy, were adopted by an immense majority.

The humane principles by which Mr. Bright has been actuated in questions affecting the public welfare received another exemplification in his attitude with regard to capital punishment. In three successive sessions this question came before the House of Commons. On the first occasion, in March, 1848, Mr. Ewart moved for leave to bring in a bill totally repealing the punishment of death. He was defeated by 122 votes to 66. Mr. Bright, in supporting the motion, said the question was making great progress in the public mind. He was of opinion that this punishment of death did not convey the awful threats that many supposed it did to that condition of men by whom crimes of this grievous nature were committed. He then proceeded to show that the present law was uncertain, irregular, and unjust to a degree which could not be imputed to any other law upon the Statute-book. Mr. Bright having cited a number of startling cases in proof of this, asked if the House would tolerate the existence of any other branch of the law for an instant, if such irregularity could be charged against it? Let us have such a law as existed in France, by which extenuating circumstances were allowed to prevent capital punishments. The hon. member concluded by asking whether England would disgrace itself by being behind Tuscany, France to a large extent, Belgium, America in some of her States, and other countries, with regard to this question. He believed that by abolishing capital punishment, and substituting a secondary punishment, we should find that crime, instead of increasing, as was dreaded, would be considerably diminished.

Mr. Ewart again brought forward his bill in the ensuing session, when his motion was lost by a majority of only 24. Mr. Bright again supported the proposition. He said it was unnecessary to go into what was called the Scripture argument, but he reminded members that for some centuries after the commencement of the Christian era, no person holding, or professing to hold, the Christian religion was known to interfere in capital punishments. In fact, up to the period of the fifth century, Christianity was understood to forbid its converts from being implicated in any degree whatever in the infliction of death upon criminals. Coming to the question of expediency, in all those countries where capital punishments were rarely or never inflicted, human life was just as safe as it was in Spain, or in England, or in Ireland. Moreover, past legislation af-

forded no proof of the advantages of capital punishment. The Legislature formerly found all its efforts ineffectual to repress the commonest offences by this punishment. The practice having failed in minor cases, how could it have an effect in putting down the crime of murder, which was almost always committed under circumstances which shut out from the contemplation of the criminal the consideration of that which must follow from the offence? The deterrent effect of the punishment had been greatly overrated, and Mr. Bright adduced cases in support of his contention. St. Augustine and others had borne special testimony to the fact that gladiatorial exhibitions and the execution of criminals had the effect of increasing crime. A punishment short of death would also relieve the authorities from the possibility of fearful mistakes. Men sometimes now escaped because juries, though feeling morally certain of their guilt, would not take the responsibility of sending them to the scaffold. These were the chief grounds upon which he advocated the abolition of the punishment of death. Mr. Ewart made a third attempt to introduce a bill, in the session of 1850, and on this occasion was defeated by six votes only. Mr. Bright was the chief speaker in this debate. Besides re-stating many of his previous arguments with fresh force, he showed that for ninety years past Parliament had followed no guiding principle upon this question. He again applied himself to demonstrating that the punishment was far from being deterrent, and that its inequality was dangerous and fatal to an impartial administration of the law. 'If you wish to teach the people to reverence human life, you must first show them that you reverence it yourselves. An old English writer, Chaucer, says of his "Parson"—

> "Christ's lore, and his Apostles twelve,
> He preached, but first he followed it himself;"

and if we would teach men to reverence and respect the lives of their fellow-men, the first and most powerful step we could take would be to abandon the halter and the scaffold, and to practise the doctrine we would inculcate upon the people.'

We have already seen that Mr. Bright secured a select committee to inquire into the operation of the Game Laws. Subsequently the hon. member and Mr. R. G. Welford published a work containing extracts from the evidence. Mr. Bright wrote an introduction, in which he demonstrated the evils of the laws from the farmer's and labourer's point of view. 'You plough and sow,' he remarked, 'and watch the growing crops

with anxiety and hope; you rise early, and eat the bread of carefulness; rent-day comes twice a year with its inexorable demand; and yet you are doomed too frequently to see the fertility which Providence bestows, and your industry would secure, blighted and destroyed by creatures which would be deemed vermin but for the sanction which the law and your customs give to their preservation, and which exist for no advantage to you and for no good to the public, but solely to afford a few days' amusement in the year to the proprietor of the soil.' In the proposed draft report of the committee, Mr. Bright said, 'Game out of season is habitually provided at the clubs and dinners of the rich; the rural labourer is made the instrument by which these indulgences of the wealthy are obtained. Everything concurs to render the Game Laws the source of demoralization, and to lead the labourers to those first breaches of the law which generally end in serious crime. The destruction of agricultural produce, the prevention of high farming, and the consequent diminution of employment, form a national evil of extensive operation. These circumstances your committee believe to have an important and most mischievous influence on the morals of the people. Violence and bloodshed consequently occur from the preservation of game, of which numerous cases were referred to by the witnesses examined.' It appeared from a return published that in the year 1843 no fewer than 4,529 convictions for offences against the Game Laws took place.

On the 23rd of March, 1848, Mr. Bright moved for leave to bring in a Bill for the Repeal of the Game Laws, but the House was very apathetic in the matter—as indeed it was for many years—and the hon. member's object was frustrated. His speech, however, on that occasion was a trenchant indictment of these laws, being supported by indisputable and startling facts as to their mischievous operation. He showed from the evidence of farmers the enormous losses consequent upon the existence of the laws, and said he was convinced that unless the cultivators of the soil had security for their capital, and were enabled to employ and pay their labourers, pauperism would constantly increase, and the depression of the rural population remain undiminished. He also strongly complained of the inequitable mode of the administration of the laws with regard to game. The magistrates belonged to a class, nine out of ten of whom were in favour of protection to game. Mr. Bright then showed the serious effect of these laws upon the morals of the labouring classes. In order to find sport for

40,000 persons at the utmost, not less than about 5,000 men were every year subjected to fines and imprisonment for offences against the Game Laws. The true principle of legislation on this question was that, while we gave to every man protection for his property, we should at the same time give no special encouragement or sanction by law to the preservation of game. 'You build churches and endow schools; and you profess a sincere wish that the labouring population of this country should be elevated and civilized; and yet you maintain a system which, by the evidence of your own committees, and by the testimony of all your courts of justice, has done more to demoralize the peasantry than any other thing which can, perhaps, be mentioned.'

In the session of 1849, the Protectionists, by a side issue, endeavoured to secure a partial re-adoption of their principles. They claimed that the agricultural classes were entitled to compensation and relief under the loss of the lately repealed protecting duties. Mr. Disraeli brought the whole subject of the burdens on land before the House by a resolution which proposes to alleviate the difficulties of the landowners by throwing a portion of the rates then assessed upon their property into the general taxation of the country. The mover of the resolution delivered a lengthy and ingenious speech in support of his proposal. Sir Charles Wood (Chancellor of the Exchequer) opposed the motion, and showed that in many European countries a far greater proportion of taxation was borne by the land than in England.

Mr. Bright spoke during the debate, and maintained, from statistics adduced, that no ground had been laid for any change in the existing burdens upon the land, which could be justified, either by the present condition of the tenant farmer, or of the prices of agricultural produce in the English markets. Having endeavoured to penetrate the veil of mystery in which Mr. Disraeli's proposition was enveloped, the hon. member remarked—

'It appears to me that it is a proposition intended to withdraw burdens to the amount of some £6,000,000 per annum from certain shoulders on which they are now saddled, and to impose them upon others—to relieve, in short, those who now carry them, by transferring them to those who hitherto have not borne them. The hon. gentleman's scheme of redistribution would probably reimpose £3,000,000 on those from whom he would take the present aggregate of £6,000,000, and apportion the other £3,000,000 to other classes of the community. Well; but the £3,000,000 that he would so withdraw from those who at present pay £6,000,000 would by no means represent the real proportion in which hon. gentlemen opposite desire to relieve the land from its present liabilities, or of the enhanced value which their scheme

would practically confer upon the land generally. Assuming the whole aggregate of land in this kingdom capable of cultivation to represent an increase equal to what it has been stated at by gentlemen opposite, a rise in the value of fee-simple of an acre, consequent on the remission of three millions of taxation on that aggregate, would be equivalent to 2 per cent., or £60,000,000 sterling. An increased value of 2 per cent. would represent £120,000,000 as the increased value of the land, supposing it to be brought for sale into the market, or that the Legislature sanctioned such a proposition as that which is now before it. I, for one, do not think that these are times in which the Legislature could be brought to listen to any such proposition. It is not likely, I trust, to meet with much favour from this House.'

Mr. Bright, in continuing, said that Mr. Disraeli's proposition was not less extraordinary than unjust. He would relieve the English landed interest, but had not a single word to say for Scotch agriculturists, while all he could give to Ireland was advice. The proposal, in fact, reminded him of an old story. 'It happened once, in a country town, and an agricultural district, that a company of strolling players proposed to get up a performance "for the benefit of the poor" of the neighbourhood. It was calculated by those who announced this intention that the object of contributing towards the relief of the poor would certainly induce the gentry to come forward generously in supporting the performance; and the event proved the soundness of this anticipation. But when it came to a question as to how the proceeds were to be appropriated, the strolling company claimed them all for themselves, on the principle that they themselves were "the poor" intended.' Mr. Disraeli would procure this boon for the tenant farmers, although he would not go for the repeal of the malt tax. He (Mr. Bright) was not one of those who thought that the people at large would be much the happier for being relieved from the malt tax; but that tax was injurious to agriculture, and oppressive upon the working-labourer and consumer. But with regard to repeal, and hon. gentlemen opposite—

> 'Their lips are now forbid to speak
> That once familiar word.'

They were told to wait till the proper time should arrive. With regard to the question of Free Trade, Mr. Bright said—

'Let hon. gentlemen beware how they turn their attention to the question of the reimposition of the duties upon corn. If you do so, you are attempting that which, I believe, is as impossible as the repeal of any Act which has passed this House in former times. You might probably effect the repeal of the Reform Bill or the Catholic Emancipation Act in the same session as that in which you reimpose the duty upon corn. Take care what you are about. Hon. gentlemen fancy that there is a lull in the public mind; that events abroad have frightened people at home. Bear in mind that in all the Euro-

pean capitals a system is being established which will have a strange effect upon the minds of the people in this country, who are looking, and wisely looking, to great and permanent changes in the constitution of Parliament; and that whilst your conduct is encouraging such ideas, you are leading the farmers of England in the pursuit of that false and uncertain light which must land them hereafter in the midst of difficulties much greater than those which encompass them at present.'

They spoke as though Free Trade had failed; and because the system of Protection was abolished, had wreaked their vengeance upon a Minister. 'You have scattered a powerful party—you have shown an anger which political parties in this country have scarcely ever exhibited, because through the power, and I will say the patriotism, of the Minister whom you discarded, the industry of this great and growing population has escaped from the pressure of that screw which, through the medium of the Corn Laws, you had laid upon the necessaries of life.' Touching, in conclusion, upon Mr. Hume's amendment for a reduction in the public expenditure, Mr. Bright warned the House that not many sessions would pass before they would be compelled to vote for the measure he recommended.

Mr. Hume's amendment having been first negatived, Mr. Disraeli's resolution was put to the House, and negatived by 280 to 189.

In the session of 1851, the subject was again discussed, under a somewhat different motion, in connection with agricultural distress, also introduced by Mr. Disraeli. The resolution ran as follows: 'That in any relief to be granted by the remission or adjustment of taxation, due regard should be paid to the distressed condition of the owners and occupiers of land in the United Kingdom.' Mr. Bright applied himself to a direct reply to Mr. Disraeli's speech. He observed that he had now left out of view the agricultural labourers, while he had not brought anything like proof, first of all that the owners and occupiers of land were suffering much, or, indeed, that they were suffering at all; and, secondly, he had failed to show that they had any special claim to relief, even if they were suffering. There were cases of difficulty among landowners—and particularly in Ireland; but there was no class which passed so triumphantly through every commercial hurricane and disaster as did the class of landed proprietors. He denied altogether that the landowners were suffering to an extent which required that they should be pointed out as an ill-used class. Their investments had recently paid better than those of the manufacturers. With regard to the occupiers, he believed that some distress

must necessarily arise from the circumstance that the prices of farm produce were temporarily depressed. But Mr. Bright brought forward statistics establishing the significant fact that the land of England and Wales paid in 1833 double the poor-rate which it paid in 1850. The springing up of manufacturing towns and villages in every direction, with their taxation to the poor-rate, relieved to a certain extent the land from the burdens to which it had been subjected. Undoubtedly, however, the condition of the tenant-farmer was one which every man must regard with sympathy. Those who suffered most notoriously held more land than they had capital to cultivate. If landowners bought land only to obtain political influence, they were on the road to ruin. If a tenant-farmer took more land than he could properly cultivate in reference to his capital, he was also on the road to ruin. There was one thing that operated most injuriously against the farmers, and that was the Game Laws. The tenant-farmers could not at once jump into a state of unequivocal prosperity. 'If they do get into a better position, it can only be by paths which are very evident; in some cases, by reductions in the rents; in other cases, by increase of produce; and in most cases, by a more successful adaptation of the powers of their farms to the production of those articles which the markets would be most willing to take from them.' Mr. Bright having shown that there was a considerable diminution of crime generally throughout the country, said in conclusion, 'I believe in my conscience that if you talk here for ever of agricultural distress, you will still find that there is no remedy which it is in the power of Parliament to give. The only possible chance for the farmers is in the exercise of those virtues and those talents by which the rest of their countrymen thrive; and if they exercise their own energies, and cultivate the quality of self-reliance, I am convinced that this country, with the finest roads, with the best markets, and with a favourable climate, will be found to triumph not only in her manufactures, but also in her agriculture.'

Mr. Disraeli's motion on this occasion was only rejected by the narrow majority of 13, in a House composed of 513 members. Mr. Bright's insistance upon the principles of Free Trade was perfectly thorough in all matters into which those principles entered, as well as regarded their effect upon agriculture. Thus during the debates in connection with the repeal of the Navigation Laws, he said that he supported the repeal of those laws on the broad ground on which he had supported

free trade in corn—namely, that the people of this country had an undoubted right to the best and cheapest transit of the produce of their industry. Adam Smith had most reluctantly tolerated navigation laws, not on the ground of protection to shipping, but for the purpose of maintaining that naval influence which this country had been so anxious—often he (Mr. Bright) believed unwisely—to possess.

Questions affecting the representation of the people and Parliamentary Reform arose frequently in the House of Commons during the sessions with which we are now dealing. On the 4th of June, 1849, for example, Mr. Hume moved for leave to bring in a Bill to Amend the National Representation. This proposed measure included household suffrage, the ballot, triennial Parliaments, and a more equal proportion of representatives to population. The scheme was supported by Mr. Berkeley, Mr. Locke King, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Bernal Osborne, and opposed by Sir George Grey, Mr. Newdegate, Lord John Russell, and others. Mr. Bright, in the course of his speech, said that in all civilized nations there was a movement in favour of a Government more under the control of the people, and more in accordance with their interests. The measure proposed by Mr. Hume was in accordance with the theory of the constitution; the existing mode of representation was not consistent with that theory, nor with the interests of the nation; it excluded masses of the community, qualified by knowledge and moral culture for the franchise, from their just privileges and rights. Lord John Russell's argument that further change was unnecessary, as Parliament had passed good measures since the Reform Act, would prove that that Act itself was unnecessary; but even now Parliament turned a deaf ear to suggestions for the diminution of taxation, and the present system engendered discontent amongst large classes of the country, which it would be better now, before they were exasperated, to remove, by proving that the old system of compelling Parliament to do justice had gone by.

At this time Mr. Dickens's novels had become very popular, and Mr. Bright, we doubt not, read and admired them. In the following passage from the speech with which we are now concerned there is a reference to an amusing passage in one of the great humorist's novels:—

'An illustrious member of Sir Robert Peel's Government declared, in 1829, that the sole alternative of Catholic Emancipation was civil war, and to avert civil war emancipation was granted; surely it was not a wise constitution which allowed things to grow to such a pass. The noble lord's Reform Bill

was passed in a hurricane of popular feeling, without which it would not have passed at all. The constitution was helped on by brickbats, the carriages of the noble lords and hon. gentlemen who opposed the measure being smashed over and over again, in many towns and villages of this country; surely it was not a perfect constitution that required the fillip of brickbats. Mr. Dickens has a story of a Captain Cuttle, who, in making a boy a present of a very large watch, tells him that if he only puts it on a quarter of an hour every morning at breakfast, and half an hour every day at dinner, it will do him credit; but whatever the case with Captain Cuttle's watch, the constitution which needs such vehement jerks to keep it moving, is scarcely one of a very creditable description . . . I can have no respect for a constitution, or a system of representation or legislation, which requires the menace of civil war ere it will grant Catholic Emancipation—which must call in the aid of brickbats to enable it to give the Reform Bill—and which must be driven into the Sale of the Encumbered Estates Bill by the starvation of a half a million of the people of Ireland.'

Mr. Hume's motion was lost by 268 to 82; but in the small band of advanced Liberals were included the names of Mr. M. T. Bass, Mr. Bouverie, Mr. Bright, Sir W. Clay, Mr. Cobden, Mr. (afterwards Lord Chief Justice) Cockburn, Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Locke King, Sir W. Molesworth, Mr. Bernal Osborne, Mr. Villiers, Lord Dudley Stuart, and Mr. Page Wood, afterwards Lord Hatherley.

Early in the session of 1851 Mr. Locke King moved for leave to bring in a bill to extend the franchise in counties to £10 occupiers, and the motion was carried against Government by 100 votes to 52. In the ensuing April, however, when the second reading of Mr. King's bill came on, a different result occurred, the bill being lost by 299 to 83. Mr. Bright spoke in its support, observing that Lord John Russell had admitted that the class was entitled to the franchise, but had, at the same time, suggested constitutional reasons why a franchise suited for boroughs was not suited for counties. He (Mr. Bright) thought the House might discuss this bill in order to see whether it should not form part of the proposed general measure. This was not a question of principle, as regarded the suffrage, but merely one of limits. A measure of this kind ought not to be looked at as a means of placing Whigs or Protectionists in office, but to be taken on its own principle, and with reference to the particular class of persons intended to be enfranchised.

There was, however, a very strong opposition to the bill, and, as we have seen, it was lost by a large majority. When Lord John Russell introduced his Reform Bill in 1852, Mr. Bright said that although he disapproved of some portions of the measure, which fell short of what the country expected, there were yet other portions which would give some degree of satisfaction to large classes. He regretted that Lord John had

not, by the ballot, taken out of the hands of employers the strong temptation to exercise a most coercive influence, and that in a manner which was degrading to those who were under them in social relations, and which would be hurtful both to the House and the country. Something ought also to have been done with regard to the small boroughs. He thought the country franchise, reduced to £20, still too high, and urged that the principle of disfranchisement should have been carried further, that larger constituencies should have additional representatives, or that new constituencies should be created. A Ministerial crisis occurring shortly after the introduction of the bill, nothing further was done with the measure of 1852.

During the debate on Mr. Berkeley's motion for the adoption of the Ballot in 1853, Mr. Bright, in supporting the proposition, showed that the number of election petitions had risen from 33 in the year 1833, to 67 in 1853. There had been since the Reform Bill 315 petitions, and it needed no argument to show that, under these circumstances, the House stood in a position of considerable humiliation before the country and the world. The hon. member entered into lengthy details showing the kind of pressure exercised upon constituencies, for which the ballot would be an almost certain remedy. If they did not wish to appear hypocrites in the eyes of the world, it became hon. members either to point out a remedy as good as that of the hon. member's for Bristol, or to vote for the introduction of this bill, in order that it might be sent to the other House of Parliament. The House, however, decided against Mr. Berkeley's motion by 232 to 172.

Twice Mr. Bright spoke upon the question of Church-rates. Supporting Mr. Trelawny's motion for a select committee on this subject in the session of 1851, he illustrated the grievances of Dissenters in regard to forcible seizures of property for rates. The question was one of only some £250,000 a year, and he exhorted Churchmen to settle it for ever. The law was most dubious with regard to these rates; and there were no two lawyers in the kingdom who would give the same opinion in reference to them. Whatever Minister might be in power, he would find it beneficial to the interests of the Church to make a clean sweep of all matters which were not alone unjust towards the Dissenters, but materially injurious to the Church itself. A committee was appointed, but its report when presented contained no conclusion. The question consequently came up again in 1853, when Dr. Phillimore moved to bring in a bill to alter and amend the laws respecting Church-rates. Sir W.

Clay proposed an amendment in favour of the abolition of the rates. Mr. Bright thought that provision might be made for the repair of churches out of Church property. The question of Church-rates, if the House chose to grapple with it, was very simple. If a bill was passed, merely abolishing those rates without any other provision, sufficient sums, in his opinion, would be raised by voluntary contributions in every parish for the repair of the fabric of the church. The pleasure resulting from the abolition of Church-rates would not be confined to Dissenters, but would be largely shared in by those who were members of the Church. The House, however, was not yet sufficiently advanced in opinion to do this. The amendment was rejected by 207 to 185, and Dr. Phillimore's original motion by 220 to 172.

Taxes on knowledge, and all restrictions upon the freedom of the press, have ever had a strong opponent in Mr. Bright. Several instances of this occurred in the session of 1853. A question arose in February respecting the Peace Society and the enlistment for the Militia. Certain persons in Buckinghamshire having distributed placards animadverting on the Militia Bill, the Government ordered a prosecution. Mr. Bright condemned the prosecution of persons who had merely attempted to dissuade others from entering the militia by distributing a few illustrated placards. The present Emperor of the French complained more of the pictures in *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News* than the articles, because his people understood the one and not the other; but it was monstrous that in this free country, the monarch of which was so much beloved, and the Government one in which so many persons placed confidence, that people, for circulating a few placards such as he had described, should be rendered amenable to a prosecution. Lord Palmerston, who had previously attacked the Peace Society, announced that the prosecutions had been absolutely and entirely stopped, but in stating this he again attacked the members of the 'Society,' as being 'much too good to be entrusted with any political functions in this wicked and sinful world.' His lordship, nevertheless, subsequently found that many of the members of the Society were men who must be reckoned with, and who were by no means to be despised.

In the House of Commons, on the 14th of April, 1853, Mr. Milner Gibson brought forward the subject of the taxes upon knowledge. He moved three resolutions, to the effect that the advertisement duty ought to be repealed; that the policy of

subjecting the cheap periodical press to stamp duties and other restrictions was inexpedient; that the law relative to taxes on newspapers was in an unsatisfactory state; and, lastly, that the Excise duty on paper materially obstructed good cheap literature, and that the maintenance of this tax as a permanent source of revenue would be impolitic, and would impede the progress of education.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer admitted that the law relating to taxes on newspapers was in an unsatisfactory state, but thought the House would set a mischievous precedent by condemning taxes on isolated grounds, without regard to the expenditure of the country. Mr. Bright, in supporting the motion said that Mr. Gibson's speech had not been answered. These duties were not brought forward as unjust taxes, but as instruments that restrained the press; and it was time that a Government professing a regard for education should deal with these taxes. It was not a question of revenue, for it could be shown that if the advertisement and stamp duties were abolished, the loss of revenue would be so small as not to be put in the balance against the advantages which would arise from it. Lord Brougham had said that the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge had found it impossible to reach those classes of society of which the agricultural labourers formed the chief portion, with their publications. For those classes the existing newspapers were too large and too expensive, and treated of matters quite beyond their limited information. They had in them more than the peasant had the heart to read: he wanted to know little about foreign affairs, but everything that was applicable to his own condition. Nothing was more true than the remark that what a man did know must be made the medium of communicating information to him; and when you interested his faculties in a variety of subjects, and enlarged his circle of information, you might at last have an educated people. Referring to mischievous publications, Mr. Bright held that the only way to counteract their evil tendency was to make the press free—to make the press the censor and corrector of the press. With the general agreement which existed in the opinion that the people should have no restrictions placed on their education, that free discussion was the law of the constitution, and the law of the prevalent religion of this country, he could not believe that the House would permit any Chancellor of the Exchequer for any long period to insist on maintaining taxes which placed restrictions on the means of education.

Mr. Cobden said that he felt so strongly on this matter, that

after giving the subject of national education his patient and constant study for many years, he came to the deliberate conviction that it was better that the taxes upon knowledge should be removed to-morrow, than even that all the votes at present granted to promote educational purposes should be continued. Upon a division, Mr. Gibson's first resolution was carried against the Government by 200 to 169, the second was negatived by 280 to 98, and the third by 270 to 80. On the 1st of July the question was again discussed, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer moved a resolution that the advertisement duty should be reduced to sixpence. Mr. Milner Gibson moved an amendment that all duties chargeable on advertisements be repealed, in accordance with the resolution passed on the 14th of April.

Mr. Bright, in opposing Mr. Gladstone's resolution, said the Chancellor of the Exchequer would find that if the advertisement duty were wholly repealed, there would be an enormous gain from the Post Office alone. He would receive more than the sixpence from the letters passing through the Post Office which the advertisement would occasion. The Stamp Act was allowed so to work that it fell almost exclusively upon political newspapers. It was scandalous that such a state of things should be allowed to exist. Having described the creditable manner in which the *New York Tribune* was produced, and its fulness of information, Mr. Bright asked the Government how it was—and for what good end and by what contrivance of fiscal oppression—that an English workman should have to pay fivepence for a London morning paper, while his direct competitor in New York could buy a paper for one penny. We were running a race in the face of all the world with the United States; but with such things there could not possibly be any fair rivalry between the artisans of the two countries. There was nothing in this country that was taxed to so scandalous an amount, as a mere matter of industry. There was an overwhelming case for the total abolition of all taxes upon the press. The stamp was kept from fear that what passed in that House, and all political information, should become free and cheap to the people; and not wishing to avow that, the argument of fiscal difficulties was used in order to maintain a tax which was perhaps the most disgraceful that in the year 1853 remained upon the Statute-book of the country.

Mr. Gladstone consented to Mr. Milner Gibson's amendment relating to pamphlets and other literary works, provided they were not continued periodically. The question that six-

pence stand part of the resolution was negatived by 68 against 63, leaving the Government in a minority of five. The Chairman then put the resolution as amended, with a cypher instead of sixpence, and in that form it was carried by 70 against 61. So that the cause of the freedom of the press triumphed.

On the subject of oaths, Mr. Bright expressed himself on several occasions. When the Parliamentary Oaths Bill of 1849 was discussed, he said he was prepared to maintain that every man who, under the constitution, was elected a member of that House, had a fair right, on all the principles of that constitution, to enter that House on the same terms and with the same powers as other members, and was to be considered fully entitled to exercise his judgment upon, and to vote upon, any and all subjects that came before him. Oaths were not necessary or effectual for any good purpose; and no man could pretend that civil or religious equality in that House was complete so long as this system prevailed. He believed that the public respect for truth would be greatly increased were oaths abolished altogether, and men taught that the pledge of their word and their honour laid an obligation upon them the most impressive that could be imposed.

Again, when the remarkable case of Mr. Alderman Salomons occurred in 1851, Mr. Bright took part in the debate. Mr. Salomons, a member of the Jewish community, had been elected member for Greenwich, and determined to take his seat. He repeated the oath of abjuration at the table of the House of Commons, but omitted the concluding words, 'on the true faith of a Christian.' Being directed by the Speaker to withdraw, he at first took his seat in the House, but afterwards retired below the bar. A discussion ensued, which was eventually postponed. On the 21st of July, Mr. Salomons again entered the House, and took his seat on the Ministerial benches. A very stormy debate followed, and three divisions took place, in two of which Mr. Salomons himself voted. Mr. Bethell delivered an opinion in favour of the competency of Mr. Salomons to sit upon taking the oath as he had done; but Sir F. Thesiger maintained a contrary opinion.

Mr. Bright rose and said that he would not go into the question of law, for as far as law was concerned they were completely in the dark. As to precedent, the House had done more in 1832 than it was now asked to do. In the case of Mr. Pease, the House left out the words 'on the true faith of a Christian;' he was a Christian, and there was no need for the omission. He did not like to use the words 'on the true faith

of a Christian,' because he understood the expression to be in the nature of an oath,—and to oaths of any kind the Society of Friends entertained a conscientious and insurmountable objection,—and the House dropped them. But it did more—it did not require him to promise to defend the Crown; and it, moreover, absolved him from taking several oaths, and permitted him to make one affirmation. 'Why, then, if members of the Society of Friends, being Christians, were permitted to omit these particular words from their Parliamentary declaration, was Mr. Salomons, not being a Christian, to be compelled to repeat those words, he declaring them to be in no way binding upon his conscience, and offering, at the same time, to take the oath which was binding on his conscience? The people of this country were loyal enough without these oaths. No men were sent there who needed to be bound in their allegiance to the Sovereign, or their obedience to the law, by any oaths whatsoever, especially by such oaths as those passed two or three centuries ago. He should like some clean sweep to be made of these oaths, and that they should regard each other, as he believed they were, as patriotic citizens of their country coming there to do that which was their duty to their country, and not binding themselves in the slightest degree by those antiquated forms of asseveration which our ancestors of old had enacted, and which were totally unsuited to the times in which we lived.

Mr. Salomons being called upon, addressed the House in a short speech. On a vote being taken, the House affirmed by 231 against 81 the motion that Mr. Salomons should withdraw. The hon. member refused to do so unless compelled, whereupon the Sergeant-at-Arms was directed to remove him, and he then retired. On the following day Lord John Russell moved a resolution denying the right of Mr. Salomons to sit until he had taken the usual oath. The debate was prolonged through two evenings, and after several amendments and divisions the original motion was carried by 123 to 63.

In the session of 1853 the question of the Jewish Disabilities was again debated, and Lord John Russell brought in a bill for their abolition. The bill passed its first and second readings by considerable majorities. A further debate ensued on the third reading on the 15th of April, and during this debate Mr. Bright delivered a lengthy speech. He observed that the sentiment against the bill had now sunk down to the phrase that they were about to unchristianize the House of Commons. It always seemed to him that this feeling came from that

appetite for supremacy which sprung from the fact that we had in England a powerful and dominant Church, connected chiefly with a powerful ruling class, and that step by step the people of this country, one section after another, had wrested from that Church, and that class, the rights of citizenship which they claimed, and which they now enjoyed. 'Now, what can be more marvellous,' asked Mr. Bright 'than that any sane man should propose that doctrinal differences in religion should be made the test of citizenship and political rights? Doctrinal differences in religion, in all human probability, will last for many generations to come, and may possibly last so long as man shall inhabit this globe; but if you permit these differences to be the tests of citizenship, what is it but to admit into your system this fatal conclusion, that social and political differences in all nations can never be eradicated, but must be eternal?'

Referring to Sir H. Inglis, one of the members for Oxford University, as a person who drew his political morality from the Old Testament Scriptures, Mr. Bright said: 'I cannot see, if the hon. baronet takes his public morality from these writings, and if Baron Rothschild takes his from the same source, and if the question of citizenship be not a matter of doctrinal religion, but of the due performance of our duties to each other and to the State—I cannot see why the hon. baronet should, for thirty or forty years, have sat in this House, and Baron Rothschild, elected by the first constituency of the kingdom, be shut out.' But he (Mr. Bright) was told that there was an awful power in another place. He did not mean Lords Temporal so much as Lords Spiritual. He had no great opinion of bishops in any case. But of all subjects, this was about the very last on which he should like to take the opinion of the bishops of the Church of England. High titles, vast revenues, great power conferred upon Christian ministers, were as without warrant to his mind in Scripture as in reason. They could not give an unbiassed, impartial judgment on a question like this.

The House of Commons had decided in favour of this bill; and if the House of Commons represented the country, the country was in favour of the bill. Fourteen times the measure had been carried by large majorities, but it had been rejected by the other House, sometimes almost with contempt. 'If the British constitution affords no remedy for this state of things, it is not worth all the boasting which the noble lord and others have heaped upon it. There are two remedies for this evil. The one is the creation of new peers. Do not for a moment

imagine that I should recommend it. I think the remedy might be worse than the disease; but that is one of the remedies, as I understand it, which the constitution offers to the Crown in cases of this nature, provided the case be of sufficient magnitude.' Then there was another remedy—that of a ferment or agitation in the country. He had seen ferments in the country, but did not much admire them. He wanted arguments and sound principles of legislation to prevail within the Houses of Parliament, and not the fear of anything that might take place outside. But the bill must be passed. 'I cannot say,' continued Mr. Bright, 'whether there is any other remedy than the creation of peers, and agitation out of doors; but let it be a resolution on the part of the Government that this bill shall pass—that they will make it a matter on which their existence, as a Government, shall be staked—and if it should not be passed, upon those persons be the responsibility of forming a Government who shall prevent this measure of justice to the Jewish population of this country.' He begged the House to get rid of this question, and to see that the Commons House of England was open to the Commons of England, and that every man, whatever his creed, if elected by a constituency of his countrymen, should sit in that House, and vote on all matters which affected the legislation of the kingdom.

The third reading of the bill was carried by 288 to 230. When it came before the House of Lords, however, on the motion of the Earl of Shaftesbury, the second reading was negatived by 164 to 115, so that the bill was once more lost.

One more important question in Parliament demands attention. Early in 1851 a panic prevailed in England on the subject of Papal aggression. The See of Rome had created an Archbishop of Westminster, and the organization of the heads of the Romish Church in this country had been generally changed without the knowledge or consent of the Government. The public excitement over this step was greatly increased by Lord John Russell's famous 'Durham letter,' and the cry of 'No Popery' was raised. On the assembling of Parliament, the Prime Minister accordingly introduced the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, a measure which prohibited Catholic bishops from assuming any title from any place or territory within the United Kingdom. A long debate took place on the 7th of February, on Lord John Russell's moving for leave to introduce the bill.

Amongst those who strongly opposed the measure was Mr. Bright. He began by remarking that the worst he would say

of Lord John's letter was that it was written under feelings of excitement which were hardly becoming a Prime Minister, and which would not add to the noble lord's character as a judicious statesman. But he had appealed to the bigotry of the country. The end of all this excitement was not yet. There was a belief that the Roman Catholic religion was making rapid strides in the United Kingdom, and that this measure of the Pope was an indication of its progress; and thinking, as he did, that it would be a calamity to this kingdom if it should return to Catholicism, he proceeded to inquire how far our past policy had been calculated to make this a Protestant empire. In the course of this inquiry, Mr. Bright described the Irish Church, abounding in wealth, and leagued, as he affirmed, with the civil power in acts of oppression, as being at the root of the extended Catholicism of Ireland. And how had our legislation acted with regard to the Roman Catholic religion in England? According to the noble lord's letter, the Church of England, which had been called the bulwark of Protestantism, was a kind of manufactory of home Popery. Notwithstanding the power and influence of the episcopacy of England, and its revenues, the depth of which the plummet of inquiry had never sounded, not only had the Church of England not saved the country from Popery, but it was said to be deeply infected with it; yet it was the ascendancy of this Church that the bill of the noble lord was intended to bolster up, and which he believed would be impotent for the object in view. 'I will neither legislate against the Catholics,' said Mr. Bright,' 'nor in support of the Establishment; and however much the noble lord may succeed in gratifying the passions or in satisfying the prejudices of his followers out of doors, I see nothing but evil in the course he is pursuing, and therefore I must withhold my consent from this mischievous bill.'

At the close of a four nights' debate, there was an enormous majority for Ministers, the numbers being—for the introduction of the bill, 395; against, 63. In consequence of a Ministerial crisis which occurred shortly afterwards, the bill dropped; but upon the resumption of office by the Whig Government, it was reintroduced with some alterations. On the order for the second reading on the 7th of March, Sir George Grey explained the provisions of the amended measure. Its leading features, however, remained the same. A debate which lasted for seven nights occurred on the second reading. The bill was opposed by the Earl of Arundel and Surrey, Mr. Roundell Palmer (Lord Selborne), Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Roebuck, Mr. Hume, and Mr. Gladstone; and supported by Sir Robert Peel (in a maiden

speech), Sir George Grey, and others. The second reading was carried by 438 to 95. Further lengthy discussions took place in committee, and at various stages of the bill; and during one of these debates, on the 12th of May, Mr. Bright delivered a second important speech against the measure. After condemning certain speeches made at the Mansion House by high officers of the Crown, the hon. member said that he had observed almost all that had appeared in the papers during this agitation, and as yet there had been no logical definition of the injury that had been inflicted on the country, and no agreement as to any remedy which Parliament could provide. The noble lord was now conscious of his difficulty with regard to Ireland, but he could not withdraw Ireland without overthrowing the whole speech upon which his legislation was founded. The noble lord objected to the Synod of Thurles; but if the two churches were compared, they must be driven to the conclusion that the Protestant bishops and clergy were quite as meddlesome in politics as the Catholics, and more especially upon this very question of national education. An instance could not be cited in which the Catholic bishops of Ireland had broken the law; and although he despised and loathed the language of the Pope, it was rather a form than a substance.

As to the alleged attack on the supremacy of the Crown by a foreign Power, said Mr. Bright, 'the supremacy of the Queen is, in the sense used by the noble lord, no better than a fiction. There might have been such a supremacy down to the times of James II., but now there is no supremacy but that of the three estates of the realm, and the supremacy of the law. The Queen is the chief of the Established Church; but that Church has not been assailed either in its wealth or power. The Queen has not the power of making Roman Catholic bishops, and therefore the making of them by the only Power on earth that has authority to make them, is no invasion of the prerogative of the Crown.' One Church always looked upon another as a usurper. He was no friend to bishops of any Church, but if they were necessary for the Anglican Church, who could say they were not necessary for the Church of Rome? If the bishops were natives here, and appointed with the consent of those over whom they would subsequently exercise control, it was reasonable to suppose that the Roman Catholic Church would become more national in character than when ruled over by the Pope and the statutes of his council. 'The noble lord has designated the proceeding as an insult to the Crown, and an attack on the independence of the nation. I wish he

could get rid of the silly and groundless fears he entertains on these points. To talk of this nation, its Crown and independence, being menaced by a petty sovereign or prince at Rome is really too ludicrous.' Yet the country was misled by these phrases, which were so misused by the Prime Minister.

The question now was not one of Protestantism but of politics. The Pope and Cardinal Wiseman had acted foolishly; but the noble lord did not touch them. The true sufferers would be the wearer of the Crown, and the millions of subjects professing the Roman Catholic religion. The Romish Church would take fresh hope from the paroxysm of terror and alarm into which the Protestants of England had thrown themselves. It was evident that the Prime Minister was in a quagmire, and he knew it well. It would be far better for the interests of the Crown, of the Kingdom, of the House, and of Christianity, if the Bill were withdrawn, instead of being proceeded with. The bill was repudiated by all classes, and the press repudiated it. It was well understood that the noble lord was practising a cheat, a delusion on the people of England. This measure, while it insulted Roman Catholics, offered no defence to Protestants. Men who were really attached to the Church of England were not in favour of the measure. Some members were disposed to yield to the cry for the bill.

'We ought to resist the cry, to stem the torrent; and it will be infinitely more honourable to go home to our avocations, if we have any, and abandon public life for ever, in defence of principles we have always held to be true, rather than be instruments of a cry to create discord between the Irish and English nations, and to perpetuate animosities which the last twenty-five years has done much to lessen. We are here to legislate calmly and deliberately, without reference to the passions and contending factions that may rage out of doors; we are in a position to see that the course in which the noble lord has been so recklessly dragging us is fruitful in discord, hatred, religious animosities—that it has separated Ireland from this country, has withdrawn her national sympathies from us, and has done an amount of mischief which the legislation of the next ten years cannot entirely, if at all, abate.'

Mr. Bright maintained that if the Premier had foreseen all the difficulties arising out of this bill, he would not have touched it; but he would not now withdraw it, because it would be humiliating to do so. Yet it was equally humiliating to go on with it, for no practical end could result from it. With this effective passage the hon. member concluded his speech:—

'The noble lord has drawn up an indictment against eight millions of his countrymen; he has increased the power of the Pope over the Roman Catholics, for he has drawn closer the bonds between them and their Church and the head of their Church. The noble lord has quoted Queen Elizabeth and

the great men of the Commonwealth, as though it were necessary now to adopt the principles which prevailed almost universally two hundred years ago. Does the noble lord forget that we are the true ancients, that we stand on the shoulders of our forefathers and can see further? We have seen the working of these principles, and their result, and have concluded to abandon them.

'I have not touched on any matter purely religious; this House is not the place for religious questions. But reflecting on the deep mysteries of religion, on my own doubts and frailties, on the shortness of the present time, and on the awful and unknown future, I ask, What am I that I should judge another in religious things, and condemn him to exclusion and persecution? I fear not for the country on questions like this. England, with a united population—through the noble lord has done much to disunite them—cares nothing for foreign potentates, be their combinations what they may. England, with her free press, her advancing civilization, her daily and hourly progress in the arts, sciences, industry, and morals, will withstand any priestly attempts to subjugate the mind, and successfully resist any menaces, whether coming from Lambeth or from Rome. I am one of a sect which has invariably held the principles I now advocate, which has in past years suffered greatly from those principles which the noble lord now wishes to introduce into our Legislature. I cannot do otherwise than raise my voice against such an attempt, and ask the noble lord to proceed no further.'

The bill eventually passed both Houses of Parliament and became law; but of all legislation of equal magnitude, and of all measures exciting an equal amount of feeling and interest, the Ecclesiastical Titles Act was probably the most ineffective and the most nugatory.

Some mention remains to be made of Mr. Bright's appearances out of the House of Commons at this period. Before the question of Reform was mooted in the House, he attended a great meeting on the subject held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, when some eight thousand persons were present. Mr. Cobden accompanied him, and the speeches of the two members roused the men of Manchester to enthusiasm on this subject,—an enthusiasm, however, which was doomed to be somewhat cooled by the apathy of the Government of the day. The Peace Society, which for thirty years had convened periodical gatherings, held a meeting in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 27th of November, 1850. The speakers included Mr. Joseph Sturge, the Rev. J. Angell James, Mr. Cobden, and Mr. Bright. The last named, after referring te the facilities for extending our intercourse with the European Continent and with the United States, and alluding also to the Great Exhibition, said: 'We know such things as these are but the heralds of those promises which are certain to be fulfilled—promises handed down to us in the great Book—but for which the world would be in darkness, but wherein we gather the cheering consolation that there shall be peace from one end of the earth to the

other. Cast your eyes back over the last thirty-five years; during the whole of that time we have had a profound peace, and have kept up war establishments notwithstanding, and have therefore gone on adding to our national debt until at length the amount of it has become so large that nobody can measure it, and nobody believes that it will ever be paid off. Look at Ireland; you have there 40,000 men maintained out of the taxes, and another 10,000 also maintained out of the taxes in the shape of armed police. Fifty thousand men in Ireland armed to keep the peace, under a system where peace is impossible, in a country where for years the misgovernment was such that in Europe it found no parallel.'

Before the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was brought forward, but just in the midst of the agitation, Mr. Bright attended a meeting at Manchester, and spoke both with energy and humour on the question. 'There has been,' he said, 'an attempt to frighten the country out of its propriety. I believe the cockneys have been very much frightened—I mean the parochial mind of the various divisions in London.' But the state of feeling in the North has been entirely different, and he instanced Hull, Leeds, Manchester, and Liverpool in proof of this. 'All this attempt to distract the public mind—all this attempt to point the finger of scorn at millions of our fellow-countrymen who differ from us in religion—all this has failed amongst the three millions of population in the part of this kingdom we inhabit, the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire. I do not know how it is, but there is some fatality about two things that the people of this country have been discussing for generations past—Corn and Catholics. This time last year there was almost terror about corn. Some people down here were afraid that corn was going to be shut out, and the squires were making a great disturbance about, not papal, but corn aggression. It is about five hundred years ago that there was a sort of Parliament—not, I believe, a very regular one—held at Kilkenny, where English interests very much preponderated. They passed what has been called the Statute of Kilkenny—a law by which they made it penal, in a high degree, for an Irishman's horse to graze upon an Englishman's land. Now from that time to this there has hardly been a session of Parliament when this question of Catholics has not been brought up; and old women of both sexes, in all parts of the country, have been frightening themselves to death about this Papal aggression.'

Towards the close of 1850 there was a considerable move-

ment in the north of England for the establishment of freehold land societies. Rochdale, amongst other towns, had its society, and celebrated its first purchase of land by a *soiree* in the Public Hall, on the 31st of January, 1851. The land, which was purchased at a cost of £10,000, was divided into about five hundred allotments. Mr. Bright was the president of the society, and in speaking at the meeting he observed that the project was not a visionary one; they were not to expect large estates or to have land for nothing; but the society was intended to enable great numbers of persons of limited incomes from wages to possess themselves of a small portion of land sufficient to build a house upon, and it would at any rate produce forty shillings a year rent; and there could be no doubt that the possession of such a portion of land would give them as clear a right to be upon the register of county voters as if they possessed a large quantity. The movement in Rochdale was very successful, and a greater portion of the land purchased by the society is now covered with residences.

When Mr. Sharman Crawford announced his intention, in April, 1851, of retiring from the representation of Rochdale, on the ground of ill-health, a requisition was forwarded to Mr. Bright by the Liberal electors, begging that he would allow himself to be put into nomination at the next election for his native town. Mr. Bright wrote declining the invitation, but stating that he regarded this expression of the approbation of his townsmen, and their confidence in his political integrity, ample reward for any sacrifices he had made, and for such services as he had been able to render during his public life. It did not seem consistent with his public duty to abandon the post he then occupied. In the year 1847 he had been returned for Manchester without a contest, and he had no reason to suppose that his conduct had been otherwise than acceptable to those who had returned him for one of the very foremost constituencies in the United Kingdom. 'I cannot, therefore,' said the hon. member, 'abandon the position to which I have been called, and in which I am conscious only of honest efforts to maintain and advance the great principles upon which I claimed and secured the confidence of the electors of Manchester.' The Rochdale Liberals next applied to Mr. Edward Miall, whom they returned at the general election of 1852 by a substantial majority over the Conservative candidate, Captain Ramsay.

When Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, visited this country in 1851, he was received with great enthusiasm; but by no town

or city was he more warmly welcomed than by Manchester. A meeting in his honour was held in the Free Trade Hall, and when Mr. Bright came forward to move an address to him the scene was most interesting and impressive. 'We are here,' said the member for Manchester, 'especially to express our sympathy with a great and noble nation, suffering from tyranny, from which this country happily has been for generations free. We are here to express our admiration for a most distinguished man, one of the most renowned defenders of liberty which our age and the world can boast of. I look upon him on this platform, a wanderer and an exile though he be, as far more illustrious to our eyes, and far more dear to our hearts, than any crowned head amongst the monarchs of continental Europe. But there are men who say, "Why, what is the use of your sympathy if you have no regiments and no ships?" Well, I shall take another line of argument, and ask you whether there be any force in opinion, in opinion acting upon the nation. Let me ask you where you are assembled? Recollect when this Hall was built—recollect by whom it was built—recollect that from this platform and from this Hall went forth the voices which generated opinion in England, which concentrated it, which gathered it little by little until it became a power before which huge majorities in both Houses of Parliament became impotent minorities, and the most august and powerful aristocracy of the world had to succumb—and finally, that through that opinion in this country we struck down for ever the most gigantic tyranny that was ever practised.' Mr. Bright also defended Kossuth in the House of Commons, when it was sought to cast aspersions upon his character.

In an address delivered before his constituents in May, 1851, Mr. Bright—who appeared in conjunction with Mr. Milner Gibson—thus spoke of the relations between members and their constituents, and of the Manchester School: 'Notwithstanding that there is not a man in England with a higher idea of the exalted position of any one who, at all worthy, should occupy the place of your representative—yet when I speak of a vote in Parliament, I endeavour to shut out from my mind any idea of controlling influence down here or elsewhere. I am most happy, when I can, to agree with you; but I think there is a higher, loftier, purer standard for a representative than even the influence of those whom he may represent; and that standard is his own intelligent, conscientious convictions of duty on the question which is before him.' When the applause which followed this independent expression of opinion had subsided,

the speaker continued: 'Now, we are called the "Manchester Party," and our policy is the "Manchester policy," and this building I suppose is the schoolroom of the "Manchester School." I do not repudiate that name at all. I think it is an honour to ourselves, and an honour to you, that by your own intelligence, your sacrifices, your combination, your intrepidity, you have actually marked the impression of your mind and your convictions upon the policy of the greatest empire of the globe. We have principles, and we intend to stand by them. Our principles are not rash—they are not unsound. We have no interest in public misfortune. Our industry thrives in peace; all that we have in the world depends upon the performance and success of whatever is valuable to the institutions of the country. I am not afraid of the future. We have not, as the chosen people of old had, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, to lead us through the wilderness of human passion and human error, but He who vouchsafed the cloud and the fire has not left us forsaken. We have a guide not less sure, a light not less clear; we have before us the great principles of justice and mercy which Christianity has taught us, and the advantages of philosophy and experience. Let us trust their principles. Let us believe that they exist for ever unchangeably in the providence of God; and if we build our national policy upon them, we may rest assured that we shall do all that lies in our power to promote that which is good, and which the patriotic amongst Englishmen have in all ages panted for—the lasting happiness and prosperity of this great nation.'

Mr. Bright, who has been a great reader of biography as well as history, referred to the former branch of literature in a speech which he made at the inauguration of the Manchester Free Library. It was a class of reading probably accomplished less ably and satisfactorily than some others; 'but still,' he said, 'there are in this library scores, probably hundreds, of admirable works of biography which you may read with the greatest benefit; and I may say for myself that there is no description of reading from which I rise, as I can myself discover, more improved by that which I have been engaged in, than when I rise from the study of the biographies of great and good men.' On the platform on this occasion, surrounding the speaker, were many distinguished writers who have added permanently to the literary treasures of the country, including Thackeray, Dickens, Lord Lytton, and Charles Knight.

Mr. Bright visited Ireland in the year 1852, and the occasion was seized by the influential merchants and other inhabi-

tants of Belfast to entertain at a public banquet one who had rendered conspicuous service to Ireland, whose general political career they also approved, and who had done so much to release trade from the fetters which formerly bound it. In his speech in response to the toast of the evening, Mr. Bright said, 'I have been in your country on this occasion for about a month. I have mixed with all classes, and I have observed as much as any ordinary man could observe within the same time. I have read much about Ireland, and everything leads me to say that this country is a sorrowful spectacle before the world, and that it is your duty, in this industrious town, to lead the way in the improvement of your native country.'

At the General Election of July, 1852, the Conservatives determined to oppose the return of Mr. Milner Gibson and Mr. Bright. Candidates were found in the persons of Mr. George Loch, and Captain the Hon. Joseph Denman. The nomination took place in St. Ann's Square. Mr. Gibson's nomination was moved by Alderman Walker, and seconded by Sir E. Armitage; that of Mr. Bright being moved by Mr. Mark Philips, and seconded by Mr. George Wilson, the hon. member's old Free-trade colleague. The Liberal candidates had the show of hands by an enormous majority, and were also subsequently victorious at the poll, the numbers being—Gibson, 5,752; Bright, 5,475; Loch, 4,360; and Capt. Denman, 3,969.

The shadow of a great war already hung over Europe in the year 1853. There was at this period a strong war party in England, which lost no opportunity of spreading its ideas. Rumours of a great impending struggle were freely current; and the friends of peace endeavoured to counteract the prevailing feeling and sentiment on this question. A conference was held in the Manchester Corn Exchange on the 27th of January, followed by a public meeting in the evening, presided over by Mr. George Wilson. Mr. Bright, who was the chief speaker, said: 'We have had uneasiness, and unnecessary preparations for war; the tinder is abroad now, the train is laid, it wants but some accident to excite a spark to set off this in flames. Taxes imposed—some taxes not reduced—trade disturbed—no financial reforms in the coming session—no Reform Bill; and we are told by some of the writers of the Government, the only thing now to be looked at is the defenceless condition of the country; and if war should arise—if war should spring out of these insane proceedings, language wholly fails me to describe the disastrous consequences that must ensue. I draw no picture of blood and crime, of battles by sea and land; they are common

to every war, and nature shudders at the enormities of man; but I see before me a vast commerce collapsed, a mighty industry paralyzed, and people impoverished and exhausted with ever-increasing burdens, and a gathering discontent. I see this now peaceful land torn with factions—our now tranquil population suffering and ferocious, everything good quenched, and everything evil stimulated and exalted. I see sown, as it were, before my eyes, the seeds of internal convulsion and of rapid national decay, and in the mournful vision which must affect the sight of any man who looks forward to these events I behold this great nation, the prolific parent of half the future world, sunk into hopeless ruin, the victim of its own ignorance and credulity, and of the cowardice and crimes of its rulers.' Ill-fated destiny was moving onwards, however, and England was shortly to be engaged in the war in the East—a war amongst the most destructive in her history.

It has not been without value, we trust, that we have followed the course of Mr. Bright in regard to these various important public questions. On all of them he assumed the representative attitude of a friend to civil and religious liberty —an attitude which he has always consistently preserved. He has been no dark plotter for the overthrow of the monarchy, or the subversion of churches as religious organizations. His principles, alike in those early stages of his career which we have just traced, as in his later years, are very simple. Briefly stated, they are—political enfranchisement for the masses, liberty and the full rights of citizenship for the individual, perfect freedom of commercial intercourse between this and all other nations, and the severance of religion from the bonds of the State.

CHAPTER XI.

RUSSIA AND THE CRIMEAN WAR.

Origin of the Crimean War.—The Holy Places.—Russia, Turkey, and the Christian Protectorate.—Declaration of War by Turkey.—Mr. Bright on British Interests and the Integrity of Turkey.—War Fever in England.—Sir Charles Napier and the Peace Society.—Powerful Speech by Mr. Bright.—Mr. Kinglake on the attitude of Cobden and Bright.—Deputation from the Peace Society to the Czar.—Treaty of Alliance between England, France, and Turkey.—Mr. Bright on Sir C. Napier and the English Cabinet.—Flippancy of Lord Palmerston.—Declaration of Hostilities against Russia.—Debate in the House of Commons. Elaborate Speech by Mr Bright.—University Reform, Church Rates, etc.—The Manchester Patriotic Fund Meeting.—Letter from Mr. Bright.—The Law of Vattel.—The Vienna Note.—The Policy of the English Government.—Effects of Mr. Bright's Letter.—Meetings at Manchester.—War Debates in the House of Commons.—Gross Mismanagement of the War.—Mr. Bright condemns the War with singular eloquence and power.—Memorable Scene during his Speech.

ENGLAND, in the language of the Earl of Clarendon, found herself 'drifting into war' at the close of the year 1853. The attitude which Mr. Bright assumed in the great Russo-Turkish conflict rendered him for a time very unpopular with a large body of his countrymen, and as his speeches on the Crimean War are in some respects amongst the most important he ever delivered; before dealing with these addresses, we shall briefly describe the events of this momentous period.

Russia had long been credited with designs upon Turkey, and as far back as the year 1844 the Czar had conversed with the Duke of Wellington and Lord Aberdeen on the probable dissolution of the Turkish Empire. The Emperor Nicholas embodied his views in a Memorandum, which was transmitted to London, but kept secret for ten years—that is, until 1854—by the British Cabinet. In 1853, a dispute arose between the Greek and Latin Churches as to the exclusive possession of the Holy Places; and in this dispute Russia and France took opposite sides. On the recommendation of the Porte, a Mixed Commission was formed, which decided in favour of the Greeks, and a firman was promulgated to this effect. France was dissatisfied with this, and the quarrel soon assumed a wider scope. The Russians demanded that a convention should be signed by

the Sultan, granting to the Czar such a protectorate over the Greek Christians in Turkey as the Sultan considered inimical to his own authority. A Conference of representatives of England, France, Austria, and Prussia met at Vienna on the 31st of July, and agreed to a Note. This was accepted by the Czar, but the Sultan subsequently required modifications which Russia rejected. On the 14th of September, two English and two French ships entered the Dardanelles, and on the 5th of October the Sultan declared war against Russia.

There was a strong feeling in England against the Northern Power: and on the very day after the declaration of war by Turkey, a meeting was held at the Manchester Athenæum for the purpose of denouncing the conduct of Russia, and of encouraging the British Government to protect British interests and to preserve the integrity of Turkey. Mr. Bright, in reply to an invitation to attend this meeting, wrote: 'I cannot conceive anything more unwise than to endeavour to excite public opinion to drive the Government into war with Russia in defence of Turkey. If such a war should be undertaken, I believe our children and posterity will judge us precisely as we now judge those who involved this country in war with the American colonies and with France, with this difference only, that we shall be held to be so much more guilty, inasmuch as having had the blunders and crimes of our forefathers to warn us and to guide us, we have wilfully shut our eyes to the lesson which their unfortunate policy has left us. Manchester, and the two millions of people in this district, I hope and believe regard those men as their worst enemies, who, by any act at this moment, shall weaken the efforts of Lord Aberdeen to preserve the peace of Europe. If men would let their reason guide them rather than their feelings, I am sure the pressure of public influence would be for peace, and not for war. War will not save Turkey if peace cannot save her; but war will brutalize our people, increase our taxes, destroy our industry, and postpone the promised Parliamentary Reform, it may be for many years.'

But the appeal was made in vain. The war fever had already severely attacked the great bulk of the population. Admiral Sir Charles Napier, speaking at a meeting on the 8th, held at the London Tavern, said he saw there was to be a Peace Conference at Edinburgh, on the 13th, 'and Mr. Bright and all the peaceable men were to be there. He was a peaceable man, and he was going too.' The Conference met on the 12th in due course. Eleven members of Parliament were present, in-

cluding Messrs. Cobden, Bright, Miall, Hadfield, Cowan, and Heyworth; and amongst others who attended were the Rev. Dr. Guthrie, Dr. John Brown, Mr. Joseph Sturge, and Mr. Elihu Burritt. Mr. Cobden delivered a powerful speech; but the chief interest centred in the second day's proceedings, when it was known that Sir Charles Napier would attend, and fulfil his threat of bearding the Peace Society on its own ground. The gallant Admiral combated the notion that naval and military men were always for war and large establishments. Lord Nelson was not fond of bloodshed or war, and the Duke of Wellington was always a peace man—'after the war was over,' he added, amid loud laughter. Sir Charles went on to say that he was just as anxious for peace as his hon. friend Mr. Cobden; but the plan propounded by the latter was not the way to preserve peace. The views of the Peace Society were perfectly right, 'if you can carry them into execution.' The speaker defended such an army and navy for England as would be sufficient for her protection, showed the great power which Russia possessed, and concluded by expressing his opinion that if France and England did not come forward hand in hand, and the other nations of Europe, to prevent the hostilities between Russia and Turkey, no man would see the last of that war. He was as fond of peace as any one could be, but he was not one of those who would support non-resisting opinions.

Mr. Bright followed. Having shown the groundlessness of previous alarms, he went on to say that the right time to oppose the errors and prejudices of the people never comes in the eyes of those writers in the public press who pander to these prejudices. 'They say, We must not do so and so; we shall embarrass the Government. But rumour says the Government has been pretty well embarrassed already. They say that we shall complicate the question if we interfere; but it cannot well be more complicated than it is, for hardly anybody but the peace men can tell how to unravel it. Now, what is it that we really want here? We wish to protest against the maintenance of great armaments in time of peace; we wish to protest against the spirit which is not only willing for war, but eager for war; and we wish to protest, with all the emphasis of which we are capable, against the mischievous policy pursued so long by this country, of interfering with the internal affairs of other countries, and thereby leading to disputes, and often to disastrous wars.' Admiral Napier had said that his friend Mr. Cobden had persuaded a feeble Government to reduce the armaments of this country to nothing. What was 'nothing' in the Admiral's

estimation? Fifteen millions a year! The hon. gentleman next observed that we had kept up great expenditure on fallacious grounds, and he objected to these armaments as provoking a war spirit. 'From the maintenance of great fleets and armies, there grows up an *esprit de corps*—there grows a passion for these things, a powerful opinion in their favour, that smothers the immorality of the whole thing, and leads the people to tolerate, under those excited feelings, that which, under feelings of greater temperance and moderation, they would know was hostile to their country, as it is opposed to everything which we recognize as the spirit of the Christian religion.'

Further, said Mr. Bright, they (the members of the Peace Society) were against intervention. Our interventions hitherto —and he cited the cases of Spain, Portugal, and Syria—had brought us nothing. As to its being our duty to interfere with a despotic power like Russia, he asked, 'If it were not contrary to international law and to the law of Europe for a Russian army to invade Hungary, to suppress there a struggle which called for, and obtained too, the sympathy of every man in favour of freedom in every part of the world,—I say, how can it be contrary to international law and the law of Europe for Russia to threaten the Sultan of Turkey, and to endeavour to annex Turkey to the Russian Empire? He wanted our policy to be consistent. As to Russia securing Constantinople and getting to India, these were very remote contingencies. Sufficient reasons had not been advanced for England's going to war, and entering on what perhaps might be a long, ruinous, and sanguinary struggle with a powerful empire like Russia.

In a very impressive passage Mr. Bright asked his hearers what war was, expressing his belief that half the people who talked about it had not the slightest idea what it involved:—

'In a short sentence it may be summed up to be the combination and concentration of all the horrors, atrocities, crimes, and sufferings of which human nature on this globe is capable. But what is even a rumour of war? Is there anybody here who has anything in the funds, or who is the owner of any railway stock, or anybody who has a large stock of raw material or manufactured goods? The funds have recently gone down 10 per cent. I do not say that the fall is all on account of this danger of war, but a great proportion of it undoubtedly is. A fall of 10 per cent. in the Funds is nearly £80,000,000 sterling of value, and railway stock having gone down 20 per cent. makes a difference of £60,000,000 in the value of the railway property of this country. Add the two—£140,000,000—and take the diminished prosperity and value of manufactures of all kinds during the last few months, and you will understate the actual loss to the country now if you put it down at £200,000,000 sterling. But that is merely a rumour of war. That is war a long way off—the small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand; what will it be if it comes nearer and becomes a fact? And surely sane men

ought to consider whether the case is a good one, the ground fair, the necessity clear, before they drag a nation of nearly 30,000,000 of people into a long and bloody struggle, for a decrepit and tottering empire, which all the nations in Europe cannot long sustain.'

War, too, continued the speaker, wore a very different aspect from what it formerly did. It would now wither up the sources of the prosperity enjoyed by the middle and working classes of the country. War in 1853 would be infinitely more perilous and destructive to the country than it had ever yet been at any former period in its history. After indicating other evils, Mr. Bright said that if we went into war we should have more banners to decorate our cathedrals and churches. Englishmen would fight as well as they ever did, and there was ample power to back them, if the country could be but sufficiently excited and deluded. We might raise up great generals—another Wellington and another Nelson too—for the country could grow men capable for every enterprise. But what would become of themselves, their country, and their children? When he thought of the tremendous perils into which unthinking men were willing to drag or to hurry the country, he was amazed how they could trifle with interests so vast, and consequences so much beyond their calculation.

With this peroration, which deeply moved the audience—ensuring first their complete silence and then their rapturous plaudits—Mr. Bright concluded :—

'You profess to be a Christian nation. You make it your boast even—though boasting is somewhat out of place in such questions—you make it your boast that you are a Protestant people, and that you draw your rule of doctrine and practice, as from a well pure and undefiled, from the living oracles of God, and from the direct revelation of the Omnipotent. You have even conceived the magnificent project of illuminating the whole earth, even to its remotest and darkest recesses, by the dissemination of the volume of the New Testament, in whose every page are written for ever the words of peace. Within the limits of this island alone, on every Sabbath, twenty thousand—yes, far more than twenty thousand temples are thrown open, in which devout men and women assemble that they may worship Him who is the "Prince of Peace." Is this a reality? or is your Christianity a romance? Is your profession a dream? No, I am sure that your Christianity is not a romance, and I am equally sure that your profession is not a dream. It is because I believe this that I appeal to you with confidence, and that I have hope and faith in the future. I believe that we shall see, and at no very distant time, sound economic principles spreading much more widely amongst the people; a sense of justice growing up in a soil which hitherto has been deemed unfruitful; and, which will be better than all, the churches of the United Kingdom—the churches of Britain—awaking, as it were, from their slumbers, and girding up their loins to more glorious work, when they shall not only accept and believe in the prophecy, but labour earnestly for its fulfilment, that there shall come a time—a blessed time—a time which shall last for ever—when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."'

Fear of Russia was the key-note of British policy in the Crimean War, though much was said also of the necessity for maintaining the 'balance of power' in Europe. Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and their friends were well aware that they were exposing themselves to unpopularity in opposing the war clamour. By many they were stigmatized as unpatriotic, though why they should not be supposed to have the interests of that country in which they were bound up at heart as much as any one else does not appear. To regard them as mistaken was permissible, but we venture to say there is not one now who would repeat at this day the charge that they were traitors to their country in 1854. Mr. Kinglake represents the general belief when he says that Cobden and Bright were honestly devoted to the cause of peace. They honestly believed that the impending war with Russia was a needless one. There was no stain upon their names. Considering the cost of the Crimean War to England, in blood and treasure, and glancing over the sequence of events since 1854, we may well ask now whether the small minority of that period were not substantially in the right.

Mr. Kinglake curiously argues that a man cannot carry weight as the opponent of any particular war if he is one who is known to be against almost all wars. 'He who altogether abjures the juice of the grape, cannot usefully criticise the vintage of any particular year; and a man who is the steady adversary of wars in general, upon broad and paramount grounds, will never be regarded as a sound judge of the question whether any particular war is wicked or righteous, nor whether it is foolish or wise.' This will seem to most people very fallacious reasoning, and certainly it is not applicable in the case of Mr. Bright, for we do not find in the course of his career a single instance where he has opposed a war without advancing detailed and specific grounds against it *per se*, as well as opposing it on those broad and paramount grounds referred to by Mr. Kinglake. Besides, Mr. Kinglake and other defenders of the Crimean War lean too much to the conclusion that a majority must be in the right. Without attempting to pronounce on so great a matter as the Crimean War, it is possible to conceive the case of a majority of one against the world, in which the minority was right.

We resume our narrative with the declaration of war against Turkey by Russia on the 1st of November, 1853. The four Powers still endeavoured to secure peace by negotiations, but early in the following January the Vienna Conferences closed.

On the 10th of February, 1854, a deputation from the Peace Society—consisting of Mr. Henry Pease, of Darlington, Mr. Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham, and Mr. Robert Charlton, of Bristol—had an interview with the Czar at St. Petersburg, their object being to prevent the impending war. The Emperor not only received them kindly, and introduced them to the Empress, but pressed them to prolong their stay and visit Moscow. Their efforts on behalf of peace proved unavailing, although the Czar declared his anxiety to maintain cordial relations between England and Russia.

A few days later, namely, on the 27th of February. England and France sent an ultimatum to St. Petersburg. The Czar returned no answer to this, whereupon a treaty of alliance was entered into between England, France, and Turkey. On the 11th of March, 1854, the Baltic fleet sailed under Sir C. Napier.

Before the gallant Admiral left London, he was entertained at a banquet at the Reform Club, and the proceedings at this banquet led to a very exciting scene in the House of Commons. Sir Charles, in responding to the toast of his health, had said, 'I suppose we are very nearly at war, and probably, when I get into the Baltic, I'll have an opportunity of declaring war.' Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty, was still more indiscreet in his language in reply to these remarks. 'My gallant friend,' he observed, 'says that when he goes into the Baltic he will declare war: I, as First Lord of the Admiralty, give him my free consent to do so.'

Mr. Bright brought these utterances under the attention of the House of Commons during a discussion which arose on the 13th of March. He began by contrasting the presence of three Cabinet Ministers at the Reform Club with the marked absence of Lord John Russell, and the Ministerial postponement of a proposed military dinner at the Mansion House; he also contrasted Lord Palmerston's former language about a French invasion with his present language about the 'good faith' of the Emperor Napoleon; compared Sir W. Molesworth's present position with his language, before taking office, against intervention; and commented unfavourably upon the utterances of Sir James Graham, the First Lord of the Admiralty. The hon. member said that Sir Charles Napier's statements respecting the impending war had been received at the banquet with loud cheers and laughter, and cries of 'Bravo, Charley!' They had further been endorsed by Sir James Graham in the most indiscreet manner; and he (Mr. Bright) wished to ask

whether the language which the right hon. baronet had used, and the tone he had adopted, had the sanction of the Cabinet, or the authority of his Sovereign.

The following is a report of the closing passage of Mr. Bright's speech, and of the manner in which Lord Palmerston met the hon. member's inquiry:—

Mr. Bright 'I must confess that I have read the whole of these proceedings with pain and with humiliation. Whether this war may be justifiable or not, is not the question; but whatever sort of war it may be, it is an awful thing to any nation that engages in it. (*Hear, hear.*) If war be not itself always a crime, it is the inevitable parent of innumerable crimes. There are thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of lives depending on this question. (*Hear, hear.*) The fortune and happiness, it may be, of millions are depending upon it. You are sending out twenty-five thousand men to the other side of Europe. You are taking a man from each of twenty-five thousand British homes; in each of those homes there is a British family filled at this moment with feelings of deepest anxiety—fear, it may be, alternately with hope. We know that before the summer is over, perhaps even before it comes, we may have news from the swamps of the Danube—news of the indiscriminate slaughter of the battle-field—which may strike hundreds of people in this country dumb with agony and despair. I want to know, then, whether the jokes and stories of the noble lord the member for Tiverton were becoming at a time like this? The question, I conceive, Sir, is one of the gravest that can be discussed by a country or a Legislature, or undertaken by a Government; and the reckless levity that was displayed was, in my opinion, discreditable in the last degree to the great and responsible statesmen of a civilized and Christian nation.' (*Loud cries of Hear, hear.*)

Viscount Palmerston. 'Sir, if the hon. and reverend gentleman' (*laughter*)—

Mr. Cobden. 'I rise to order. The noble lord, has, I believe, made use of an epithet, in speaking of my hon. friend, that is not justified by the rules of this House. I trust I shall not misinterpret his meaning when I say that it was not intended to be personally offensive; but I think I shall not be contradicted by a majority of this House when I say that it was flippant and undeserved.'

Viscount Palmerston. 'I will not quarrel, Sir, with the hon. member for the West Riding about words; but as the hon. gentleman (Mr. Bright) has been pleased to advert to the circumstance of my being chairman at the dinner to which allusion has been made, and as he has been kind enough to express an opinion as to my conduct on that occasion, I deem it right to inform the hon. gentleman that any opinion he may entertain either of me personally, or of my conduct, private or political, is to me a matter of the most perfect indifference.'

There was more of a like character with this in Lord Palmerston's reply. Whether it was that he was conscious that the proceedings at the banquet were incongruous we cannot tell, but certainly in his reply to Mr. Bright there was not the usual flow of his happy wit. He took refuge in inferior *badinage*, and the only answer he gave to the question respecting Sir James Graham, was to the effect that he did not think his Ministerial colleague had discredited himself by attending a dinner given by the Reform Club to a distinguished officer, one of its own members, before starting for foreign service. The subject dropped after some further brief speeches.

Mr. Trevelyan has an interesting passage upon this episode in his *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay:* 'There was very little trace,' he observes, 'either of statesmanship or Christianity in Lord Palmerston's reply. He began by alluding to Mr. Bright as "the hon. and reverend gentleman." He was called to order for this gross violation of the ordinary courtesies of debate; but, instead of taking advantage of the interruption to recover his temper and self-respect, he continued his remarks in a strain which, though it did not justify the interference of the Speaker, was most repugnant to the taste and feeling of his brother members. For the first and last time in his life, Macaulay had nothing to say in defence of his hero. "I went to the House on Monday," he writes; "but for any pleasure I got I might as well have stayed away. I heard Bright say everything that I thought; and I heard Palmerston and Graham expose themselves lamentably. Palmerston's want of temper, judgment, and good breeding was almost incredible. He did himself more harm in three minutes than all his enemies and detractors throughout the world have been able to do him in twenty years. I came home quite dispirited.'

Towards the close of March, a Royal Message to Parliament formally announced that England had come to an open rupture with Russia, and that war was now actively to commence. The message announcing the declaration of hostilities was discussed in both Houses on the 31st. In the Lower, Lord John Russell moved the address to Her Majesty.

Mr. Bright, in a long speech, gave his reasons for opposing the war. He was anxious, he said, to clear himself from any portion of the responsibility attaching to those who supported the Government policy. Mr. Disraeli had spoken of the war as 'a just and unnecessary war.' As to its justice, he (Mr. Bright) would not discuss that. Every war undertaken since the days of Nimrod had been declared to be just by those in favour of it; but he might at least question whether any war that was unnecessary could be deemed to be just. Nor would he discuss the question on the abstract principle of peace at any price. He would maintain that in deliberating on the question of war, it became them to show that the interests of the country were clearly involved; that the objects for which the war was undertaken were probable or at least possible of attainment; and that the end proposed to be accomplished was worth the cost and the sacrifices which they were about to incur. These were the principles, and no other, on which he should discuss the question. 'Now, it seems to me,' continued

Mr. Bright, 'quite impossible to discuss this question without considering the actual condition of Turkey. The hon. member for Aylesbury (Mr. Layard) assumes that they who do not agree in the policy he advocates are necessarily hostile to the Turks, and have no sympathy for Turkey. I repudiate such an assumption altogether. I can feel for a country like that, if it be insulted or oppressed by a powerful neighbour; but all that sympathy may exist without my being able to convince myself that it is the duty of this country to enter into the serious obligation of a war in defence of the rights of that country. The noble lord the member for Tiverton is one of the very few men in this House, or out of it, who are bold enough to insist upon it that there is a growing strength in the Turkish Empire. If any one thing is more apparent than another, on the face of all the documents furnished to the House by the Government of which the noble lord is a member, it is this, that the Turkish Empire is falling, or has fallen, into a state of decay, and into anarchy so permanent as to have assumed a chronic character.' Constantinople was the seat of factions and intrigues. Russia, on the contrary, was a powerful country; it had, too, religious affinities with a majority of the population of European Turkey which made it absolutely impossible that its Government should not more or less interfere, or have a strong interest, in the internal policy of the Ottoman Empire. Though himself opposed to intervention, yet if the House were Russian, they would be strongly in favour of such intervention as Russia had attempted.

If Russia made certain demands on Turkey in the outset, this country insisted that Turkey should not consent to them, and in proof of this Mr. Bright quoted from the despatches of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe. There was nothing in the demands of Russia which the Sultan ought to have refused, and would not have conceded, if he had not thought war, with England and France for his supporters, more advantageous to his interests. With regard to the Vienna Note, which nobody seemed to understand, what were they to think of those arbitrators or mediators—the four ambassadors at Vienna, and the Governments of France and England—who, after discussing the matter in three different cities, and at three distinct and different periods, and after agreeing that the proposition was one which Turkey could assent to without detriment to her honour and independence, immediately afterwards turned round, and declared that the note was one which Turkey could not be asked to accede to, and repudiated in the most formal and express

manner that which they themselves had drawn up, and which, only a few days before, they had approved of as a combination of wisdom and diplomatic dexterity which had never been excelled? The Emperor of Russia had expressed his willingness to accept the Vienna Note—not in the sense that Count Nesselrode had placed upon it, and which, it was said, made it impossible for Turkey to accede to it—but in that which the ambassadors at Vienna declared to be its real meaning. It was therefore impossible from this fairly to doubt the sincerity of the desire for peace manifested by the Czar.

Mr. Bright said he had never thought that our own Government was not honestly anxious for peace, but they had left the issue of peace or war in the hands of the Turks. 'In my opinion, the original blunder was committed when the Turks were advised to resist and not to concede; and the second blunder was made when the Turks were supported in their rejection of the Vienna Note; for the moment the four Powers admitted that their recommendation was not necessarily to be accepted by the Porte, they put themselves entirely into the hands of the Turk, and might be dragged into any depth of confusion and war in which that respectable individual might wish to involve them.' There were three plans for dealing with this Turkish question, advocated by as many parties in this country. The first party were in favour of war in order to cripple Russia, and these would have gone to war long ago. The second party were in favour of the Government policy of war (though war delayed), a policy placing the responsibility for the war on other shoulders than our own. Then there was a third course which he (Mr. Bright) had all along recommended—viz., that war should have been avoided by the acceptance on the part of Turkey either of the last Note of Prince Menchikoff or of the Vienna Note; or, if Turkey would not consent to either, that then she should have been allowed to enter into the war alone, and England and France—supposing they had taken, and continued to take, the same view of the interests of Western Europe which they had hitherto taken—might have stood aloof until the time when there appeared some evident danger of the war being settled on terms destructive of the balance of power; and then they might have come in, and have insisted on a different settlement. He would either have allowed or compelled Turkey to yield, or would have insisted on her carrying on the war alone. If either the Vienna Note or that of Prince Menchikoff had been accepted, the Emperor of Russia never intended to march on Constantinople. Indeed, he had pledged himself

in the most distinct manner to withdraw his troops at once from the Principalities, if the Vienna Note were accepted; and therefore in that case Turkey would have been delivered from the presence of the foe; peace would for a time have been secured to Europe; and the whole matter would have drifted on to its natural solution—which is, that the Mohammedan power in Europe should eventually succumb to the growing power of the Christian population of the Turkish territories.

Mr. Bright then dealt with the 'balance of power' argument, on which the whole question really turned. He quoted passages from Mr. Burke, Mr. Whitbread, Mr. Fox, and Lord Holland, proving that they had never regarded the Turkish Empire as any part of the balance of power in Europe. When the United States waged war with Mexico, we never interfered on behalf of Mexico on this ground of maintaining the balance of power. Nor, happily, did England and France go to war over the seizure of Algiers. Further, on this ground Austria might complain of ourselves, for England, compared with Austria, was then three times as powerful as she was thirty or forty years before. If the phrase of the 'balance of power' were to be brought in on every occasion to stimulate this country to war, there was an end to all hope of permanent peace. The whole notion was a mischievous delusion which had come down to us from past times. Lord John Russell had pledged himself to the integrity and independence of Turkey, but nothing could be more destructive of this than his policy. At that moment there were no less than three foreign armies on Turkish soil; there were 100,000 Russian troops in Bulgaria; there were armies from England and France approaching the Dardanelles, to entrench themselves on Turkish territory, and to return nobody knew when. All this could hardly contribute to the 'independence' of any country. There were, further, insurrections springing up in almost every Turkish province, and the whole country must shortly be in a distracted and demoralized state. It was not likely that the reforms called for in Turkey would be conceded.

The 'balance of power' theory had been entirely overthrown by the policy of the Government, and no one would argue that Turkey could come out of her present difficulties more able to cope with the power of Russia than she was before. But we were told, the hon. member further remarked, that we were undertaking to repress and to curb Russian aggression. These were catching words, and they had served to blind the eyes of multitudes wholly ignorant of the details of this question.

'You may make a treaty with Russia, but if Russia is still powerful and ambitious—as she certainly will be, and if Turkey is exhausted and enfeebled by the war—as she certainly will be, then I want to know what guarantee you have, the moment the resources of Russia have recovered from the utmost degree of humiliation and exhaustion to which you may succeed in reducing her, that she will not again insist on terms with Turkey infinitely more perilous than those which Turkey has been urged to her ruin to refuse? It is a delusion to suppose you can dismember Russia—that you can blot her from the map of Europe—that you can take guarantees from her, as some seem to imagine, as easily as you take bail from an offender, who would otherwise go to prison for three months. England and France cannot do this with a stroke of the pen, and the sword will equally fail if the attempt be made.'

How were the interests of England involved in this question? He (Mr. Bright) had sympathy with all oppressed nationalities, but it was not his duty to make this country the knight-errant of the human race, and to take upon herself the protection of the thousand millions of human beings who had been permitted by the Creator of all things to people this planet. Coming to the cost of this war, and the effect upon the finances of the country, the speaker referred to the services already rendered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gladstone). The country had set its seal to this—that his financial measures, in the remission and readjustment of taxation, were worthy of the approbation of the great body of the people. Now there was a great difference of opinion in the Cabinet on this Eastern question, and to no member of the Government could the existing state of things be more distressing than to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for it dashed from him the hopes he entertained that session after session, as trade extended and the public revenue increased, he would find himself the beneficent dispenser of blessings to the poor, and indeed to all classes of the people of this kingdom. Where was the surplus now? No man dared even to ask for it, or for any portion of it.'

Mr. Bright next alluded to the proposed abolition of the newspaper stamp—which could scarcely now be hoped for,—to the postponement of Reform, and to the disastrous effect which the war must have upon the trade of the country. The funds had already fallen in value to the amount of £120,000,000 sterling, and railway property was quoted at about £80,000,000 less than was the case a year ago. Then they must consider the terrible loss of life which must ensue from this war, which

military authorities placed at between 10,000 and 20,000 men. We were at present boasting of an alliance with France, but alliances were dangerous things, and by this boasted alliance with France we might find ourselves involved in great difficulties at some future period in these transactions. After studying the correspondence on this question, he was amazed at the course which the Government had pursued. This he said in no spirit of hostility to the Government, but they had committed a grievous, it might be a fatal error. Replying to the argument that the war was popular, and that it was foolish and eccentric to oppose it, Mr. Bright said he doubted if the war was very popular in the House, but if it were, what was more popular than the American war? Where was now the popularity of that disastrous and disgraceful war, and who was the man to defend it? Again, what war could be more popular than the French war? 'For myself,' said Mr. Bright, 'I do not trouble myself whether my conduct in Parliament is popular or not. I care only that it shall be wise and just as regards the permanent interests of my country, and I despise from the bottom of my heart the man who speaks a word in favour of this war, or of any war which he believes might have been avoided, merely because the press and a portion of the people urge the Government to enter into it.' He concluded by sketching what England might have been but for her interference in European wars:—

'The past events of our history have taught me that the intervention of this country in European wars is not only unnecessary, but calamitous; that we have rarely come out of such intervention having succeeded in the object we fought for; that a debt of £800,000,000 sterling has been incurred by the policy which the noble lord approves, apparently for no other reason than that it dates from the time of William III.; and that, not debt alone has been incurred, but that we have left Europe at least as much in chains as before a single effort was made by us to rescue her from tyranny. I believe if this country, seventy years ago, had adopted the principle of non-intervention in every case where her interests were not directly and obviously assailed, that she would have been saved from much of the pauperism and brutal crimes by which our Government and people have alike been disgraced. This country might have been a garden, every dwelling might have been of marble, and every person who treads its soil might have been sufficiently educated. We should indeed have had less of military glory. We might have had neither Trafalgar nor Waterloo; but we should have set the high example of a Christian nation, free in its institutions, courteous and just in its conduct towards all foreign states, and resting its policy on the unchangeable foundation of Christian morality.'

Mr. Bright thus relieved his conscience, in a masterly and elaborate speech, but one which fell upon unsympathetic ears. The Address was voted as a matter of course.

The Government introduced during this session several bills, having for their object the prevention of bribery. In con-

sequence of the pressure occasioned by the war, however, these bills were withdrawn on the 29th of May. Mr. Disraeli, in a speech full of wit and sarcasm, made merry over the fortunes of a Government which had made so many sacrifices for the public good. Mr. Bright, on rising, referred to the lively encounter which had taken place between Mr. Disraeli and Lord John Russell, and said he thought the latter had not come off without some scars. Turning to the question before the House, the hon. member said it was impossible to disguise the fact that the elements of the Government were such that it could not act for the welfare of the country. As an ingenious gentleman had said, they would get on admirably if they only avoided politics. Mr. Gladstone had so far saved the Government by his measures, but it was clear that the noble lord who was by courtesy called the leader, did not lead the House, and that the House did not follow him. He was extremely sorry that the Government did not possess the confidence of the House of Commons, because many of their measures were wise and just. It was a dangerous doctrine to set up that because a Government had landed us in war, it must be supported at whatever cost, and the loss of other legislation, until the war was ended. After paying a high compliment to the Earl of Aberdeen, Mr. Bright said he must still complain that we were engaged in a war for objects on which the Government had never yet condescended to enlighten the House; and as to the terms on which peace was to be procured, no one had any idea. Seeing the mischievous policy of the noble lord and his colleagues, he saw no ground for the noble lord calling for the confidence of the House, or for the continued support and approbation of the country.

We interrupt the thread of our narrative for a moment to refer to several questions of importance, not connected with the war, which arose in the session of 1854, and upon which Mr. Bright addressed the House. The first of these was the Oxford University Reform Bill, introduced by Lord John Russell for the purpose of making further provision for the good government and extension of the University of Oxford, and the colleges therein. Mr. Bright spoke with great energy against the measure, supporting Mr. Heywood's motion to refer it to a select committee. He said it seemed to him that two principles had been at work in the formation of this bill, which was the result of a compromise between them, and he thought it was a question whether a Cabinet that could not agree on the fundamental principles of a measure should bring it forward.

He felt a repugnance to assist in the tinkering amendment of an institution from which, though national, he as a Dissenter was excluded, and with which he had no sympathy. The postponement of the bill for a year would be cheaply purchased by the expulsion from it of that compromising spirit by which the Government bills were now so often emasculated. 'You do not exclude us,' said Mr. Bright, referring to the great Dissenting bodies of the country, 'when you send your tax-gatherers round, or when you ask for the performance of the duties of citizenship; you do not exclude us from the statistical tables of your population, of your industry, of your wealth, of your renown. You take all your population in, and say, "This is a great, an united people, which are called the British people;" and you declare in your speeches and perorations that you are proud to rule over such a nation. But when you come to the question of education in the institutions which you call national Universities, then you, the House of Commons, and you the Liberal-Conservative, or the Conservative and Liberal Administration—you who occupy the offices from which you ignominiously ejected your predecessors—you who say there are no men to come after you—you ask us to accept a bill of this pusillanimous and tinkering character, insulting, as I have already described it, to one-half the population of the country.'

Once more Mr. Bright was in advance of his time, and his forcible plea for justice was ineffectual. University restrictions remained, and the Government measure, after protracted debates, passed both Houses and became law.

On the subject of the repeal of the Stamp Duty on newspapers and periodicals, Mr. Bright again advanced cogent arguments this session on behalf of the proposed abolition, showing how the spread of knowledge and education was seriously retarded by the operation of the law. He also supported Mr. Berkeley's motion on the Ballot, which was defeated by a narrow majority. Whatever difference of opinion there might be with regard to bribery, he affirmed that intimidation prevailed at almost all the contested elections in the United Kingdom. Two hundred members of the House were already pledged to the Ballot, and he hoped that all constituencies would soon make this a test question. Lord Palmerston did not think the evils of the existing system very great, and yet at almost every contested election scenes took place which were not only degrading to the country, but to human nature itself. He believed that so great was this evil, that it very much

warped all their efforts, whether by education or by religious influence, to improve the standard of morality, patriotism, and honourable feeling amongst the people. Moreover, no harm would arise from the experiment of the ballot, while a candidate who could not then get a vote by intimidation or threats, might get one by kindness, argument, and persuasion. He did not see why this should be a party question. If by so doing he gave only to a few of the unfortunate slaves of will and power in this country liberty and freedom, he would vote for this measure. The House had given the voter the trust, and, contrary to every principle of law, refused him the means absolutely necessary to fulfil that trust.

Two questions affecting the Nonconformists arose this session, one being that of Church Rates, and the other that of Nonconformist grants in Ireland. Mr. Bright warmly supported Sir W. Clay's bill for the abolition of Church Rates. After adducing many arguments against the continuance of the rates, he said the Dissenters did not come to that House as supplicants. They had been from the time of the Reformation a growing body in this country. The Puritans first, the Nonconformists afterwards, and now the Dissenters; and all the power of the Jameses, the Charleses, and the Georges had not been able to arrest the deepening, widening, fertilizing, and purifying stream of Nonconformity which existed in and blessed this country. During the reign of Charles II., 15,000 families were ruined, and 4,000 or 5,000 persons died in gaol, because they adhered to their religious convictions; and did they think it possible, by this law they were discussing, or by any law but the law of kindness and conviction in the human heart, to bring the Dissenters of the country back to the Established Church, or to prevent dissent from constantly swelling and increasing, while the members belonging to the Established Church were continually diminishing? He assumed that the House wished to get rid of the whole question of Church Rates, and that there was spirit enough in the Church to look after and attend to its wants. It was to the interest of all parties, and to the greater interest of the country, to set this long-vexed question at rest for ever.

The bill was lost, however, but only by the small majority of 27, in a House composed of nearly 400 members.

The second question arose out of Miscellaneous Estimates, when it was proposed to grant the sum of £38,745 to defray the expense of Nonconforming, Seceding, and Protestant Dissenting ministers in Ireland. Mr. Bright strongly opposed the

grant, observing that it was neither a grant to members of an Established Church, nor was it in the nature of a charitable grant; and he could show that it was in its origin entirely political. This he proceeded to prove, tracing the history of the grant to the year 1690, when it was small in amount. But in the last fifty years—that is, from 1804—it had risen from £4,000 to £38,000. The grant was unnecessary, for the Presbyterians of the north of Ireland were the most prosperous persons in the Irish nation belonging to the middle class. Mr. Bright contrasted their voluntary efforts unfavourably with those of the Dissenters of Wales and the members of the Presbyterian and Free Churches of Scotland. The prosperous men of Ulster, in matters of religion, in the payment of their own ministers, in subscribing for purposes of education and for missions, fell entirely and deplorably short of all other Dissenters and Nonconformists in the United Kingdom. The Presbyterians grasped at this money, and the grant was an inducement to the fabrication of ministers and chapels, and an inducement for congregations to come year after year to that House for participation in the *Regium Donum*. As to a pecuniary claim for civilizing Ulster, he should like to know who it was that civilized Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire. It was the Nonconformists, who not only did not come to Parliament for a grant, but were in favour of the abolition of grants to religion. In the language of Dr. Candlish, these grants to the Dissenting bodies were nothing but 'hush-money' from the State. They were a disgrace to the bodies which accepted them, but doubly so to the Presbyterians of Ulster, who were quite rich enough to support their own ministers. The State subsidy which they now received sapped the life, the power, and the vitality of their Church.

Mr. (now Earl) Cairns undertook to reply to Mr. Bright, his chief argument being that the main question was a matter of contract—being part and parcel of the settlement of Ulster. The vote was carried by 149 to 62.

We return now to the subject of the Crimean war. In the midst of the decisive events happening in the East, for the battles of the Alma and Balaclava had just been fought, Mr. Bright received an invitation from Mr. Absalom Watkin to attend a meeting of the Manchester Patriotic Fund. Mr. Watkin stated in his communication that in his opinion the war was justified by the authority of Vattel. Mr. Bright replied by letter to this invitation on the 29th of October. Having observed that the meeting would be a most improper occasion

for a discussion as to the justice of the war, he went on to say: 'With regard to the war itself, I am not surprised at the difference between your opinion and mine, if you decide a question of this nature by an appeal to Vattel. The "law of nations" is not my law, and at best it is a code full of confusion and contradictions, having its foundation on custom, and not on a higher morality; and on custom which has always been determined by the will of the strongest.' The American war was a just war according to the principles laid down by writers on 'the law of nations,' but no man in his senses would now say that the policy of George III. towards the American colonies was a wise policy, or that war a righteous war. So too with regard to the French war. He would not submit his judgment on such matters to that of Vattel. Two independent Governments had a dispute, and we thrust ourselves into the quarrel. We had not been attacked—not even insulted in any way. But for the English Minister at Constantinople and the Cabinet at home, the dispute would have settled itself, and the last Note of Prince Menchikoff would have been accepted. While he did not defend the act of Russia in crossing the Pruth and occupying the Principalities, he thought it likely it could be well defended out of Vattel, and it was at least as justifiable as the menacing attitude of Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston towards Greece, in 1850, in regard to the Don Pacifico case.

But the passage of the Pruth, continued Mr. Bright, was declared by England, France, and Turkey not to be a *casus belli*, and the celebrated Vienna Note was now drawn up. Our Government 'agreed to the Vienna Note; not fewer than five members of this Cabinet have filled the office of Foreign Secretary, and therefore may be supposed capable of comprehending its meaning; it was a note drawn up by the friends of Turkey, and by arbitrators self-constituted on behalf of Turkey; they urged its acceptance on the Russian Government, and the Russian Government accepted it; there was then a dispute about its precise meaning, and Russia agreed, and even proposed, that the arbitrators at Vienna should amend it, by explaining it, and limiting its meaning, so that no question of its intention should henceforth exist. But the Turks having rejected it, our Government turned round, and declared the Vienna Note, their own note, entirely inadmissible, and defended the conduct of the Turks in having rejected it. The Turks declared war, against the advice of the English and French Governments—so, at least, it appears from the Blue

Books; but the moment war was declared by Turkey, our Government openly applauded it. England, then, was committed to the war. She had promised armed assistance to Turkey—a country without government, and whose administration was at the mercy of contending factions; and, incapable of fixing a policy for herself, she allowed herself to be dragged on by the current of events at Constantinople. She "drifted," as Lord Clarendon said, exactly describing his own position, into the war, apparently without rudder and without compass.'

The writer maintained that the whole policy of the English Government in this matter was marked with an imbecility perhaps without example. There were evidences that one section of the Cabinet had always been for war, and he must point out the disgraceful feebleness of the Ministry if he was to absolve them from the guilt of having sought occasion for war. When the Vienna Note was accepted by Russia, the Turks should have been prevented from going to war, or should have been allowed to go to war at their own risk. 'My doctrine,' wrote Mr. Bright, 'would have been non-intervention in this case. The danger of the Russian power was a phantom; the necessity of permanently upholding the Mahometan rule in Europe is an absurdity. Our love for civilization, when we subject the Greeks and Christians to the Turks, is a sham; and our sacrifices for freedom, when working out the behests of the Emperor of the French and coaxing Austria to help us, is a pitiful imposture. The evils of non-intervention were remote and vague, and could neither be weighed nor described in any accurate terms. The good we can judge something of already, by estimating the cost of a contrary policy.'

The writer showed this cost to be, war threatening to involve every country in Europe, a vast expenditure, disturbance of trade throughout the world, high prices of food, and an enormous loss of human life; and he thus concludes his remarkable letter:—

'When the time comes for the "inquisition for blood," who shall answer for these things? You have read the tidings from the Crimea; you have, perhaps, shuddered at the slaughter; you remember the terrific picture—I speak not of the battle, and the charge, and the tumultuous excitement of the conflict, but of the field after the battle—Russians, in their frenzy or their terror, shooting Englishmen who would have offered them water to quench their agony of thirst; Englishmen, in crowds, rifling the pockets of the men they had slain or wounded, taking their few shillings or roubles, and discovering among the plunder of the stiffening corpses images of the "Virgin and the Child." You have read this, and your imagination has followed the fearful details. This is war,—every crime which human nature can commit or imagine, every horror it can perpetrate or suffer; and this it is which our Christian Government

recklessly plunges into, and which so many of our countrymen at this moment think it patriotic to applaud! You must excuse me if I cannot go with you. I will have no part in this terrible crime. My hands shall be unstained with the blood which is being shed. The necessity of maintaining themselves in office may influence an Administration; delusions may mislead a people; Vattel may afford you a law and a defence; but no respect for men who form a Government, no regard I have for "going with the stream," and no fear of being deemed wanting in patriotism, shall influence me in favour of a policy which, in my conscience, I believe to be as criminal before God as it is destructive of the true interest of my country.'

This letter caused quite a ferment of indignation amongst the war party, which was further enhanced when it was published in the *St. Petersburg Journal*, and all the leading continental newspapers. Mr. Bright had fortified his letter by notes and extracts from blue-books, etc., supporting his positions, but his opponents did not concern themselves with answering his arguments. War had come, and it was deemed patriotic to support a war policy. In the month of December the Mayor of Manchester called a public meeting in the Town Hall, in order that the citizens might have an opportunity of discussing Mr. Bright's letter. A requisition had been presented to the Mayor, embodying 613 signatures, but it appeared on examination that out of the signatures only fifty had voted for Mr. Bright at the last election. The scene at the meeting was almost indescribable. Mr. Bright, however, was loudly cheered when he appeared and advanced towards the platform. Mr. W. R. Wood moved the following resolution: 'That this meeting, having learned that the letter of Mr. John Bright on the war has been translated and circulated in Russia, desires to declare that the citizens of Manchester do not concur in the opinions expressed by Mr. Bright, but, on the contrary, they are convinced that the war is just and necessary, and do earnestly desire that it may be carried on with the utmost vigour until it shall be terminated by an honorable peace.' Mr. Absalom Watkin seconded the motion. Mr. Alderman W. B. Watkins moved an amendment to the effect that Mr. Bright exercised an undoubted right in expressing his opinion on the war; and that although this opinion differed from that held by many of his constituents, it was tyrannical and unjust to censure him for the manly avowal of his sentiments on so important a subject. Mr. Alex. Henry seconded the amendment. Mr. Bright rose to speak, but the mingled cheers and groans prevented him from being heard. Being compelled at length to address himself to the reporters, he spoke for a few minutes defending his letter, and added, 'My object is to avert from

England and from Europe this great calamity of war; and whatever may be the result to me personally, I shall never shrink from taking the course which I have taken up to this hour.'

The Mayor several times called for a show of hands from the meeting, but on each occasion the numbers were so evenly balanced that he was unable to decide the matter, and consequently dissolved the meeting. Mr. Bright, on the same evening, addressed his friends at Newall's Buildings on the question of the war. He asked whether, after this struggle, liberty in Europe, reform, or anything good in the politics of this country, would be in a better position than it was before the war commenced. The verdict of events would ultimately be given in their favour. The meeting unanimously passed a vote of thanks to Mr. Bright for the manliness with which he had avowed his unflinching attachment to the principles which had hitherto guided his conduct, and which would continue to guide him.

By way of showing, however, the feverish heat to which the passions of a large proportion of the people had risen, it may be mentioned that Mr. Bright was burned in effigy by a portion of the population at New Cross Ward. Whether we agree or disagree with his opinions on the Crimean war, considering the temper of the time, there was something heroic in the way in which this political Ajax defied the lightning.

On the 12th of December, 1854, Parliament again assembled, and was opened by the Queen in person. War debates immediately ensued, and Ministers were severely attacked for the gross mismanagement in the administrative departments. Incapacity and stupidity reigned in the camp before Sebastopol, in the harbours of Balaclava, and in the hospitals of Scutari.

In order to provide for further emergencies, the Duke of Newcastle introduced the Foreign Enlistment Bill, the object of which was to raise a force of 15,000 foreigners, to be drilled in this country. The number was afterwards reduced to 10,000. The bill was opposed by many members of both Houses as dangerous in principle and policy, but in the end it was successfully carried through both Lords and Commons. Lord John Russell moved the third reading in the House of Commons on the 22nd, and Mr. Bright was the last member who spoke before the division.

His speech on this occasion was not a very lengthy one, but it was amongst the most striking and powerful addresses which Mr. Bright has ever delivered. It bore evidences of being almost entirely impromptu, and this makes it the more

remarkable. It sprang from the white heat of conviction, and the flame-tipped words with which it closed touched the spirit of every man in that large assembly.

Mr. Bright began by correcting an error into which Lord John Russell had fallen with regard to Mr. Cobden's speech. The latter had not charged the Government with making war in something of a propagandist spirit in favour of nationalities throughout the Continent, but he had said that that portion of the population which clamoured for war, and upon whose opinions the Government based their defence, were in favour of the setting up of nationalities. The noble lord had also acted most disingenuously with regard to a phrase of Lord Palmerston's. The latter, referring to the Mahometan population of Turkey, had affirmed that they had improved within the last twenty years more than any other nation in Europe; but now his noble colleague had turned the question to the condition of the Christian population. 'The real question was, as every hon. gentleman knows,' said Mr. Bright, 'What was the condition of the Mahometan? and there is not a gentleman in this House who is not aware that the Mahometan portion of the population of the Turkish Empire is in a decaying and dying condition, and that the two great empires which have undertaken to set it on its legs again will find it about the most difficult task in which they ever were engaged.' He supported this statement by extracts from letters, showing the bad opinion entertained of the Turks by our own officers. As to their commerce, industry, and revenue, nothing could be in a worse condition. The Turk could not borrow money in the London market at less than eight or nine per cent., and yet Russian funds were very little lower than those of the London and North-Western Railway, although three great empires were already in arms against Russia. After showing that Russia might have gone to war with this country in the Don Pacifico case, if she had been so minded, but refrained from doing so, Mr. Bright referred to the position of Austria in the present conflict. He was prepared to prove, he said, that from the beginning of this dispute there was not a single thing which Austria wished to do in the course of the negotiations, or even which France wished to do, that the Government of the noble lord did not systematically refuse its assent to, and the Ministry were alone responsible for the failure in every particular point which took place in the negotiations. It was through the interference of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe—supported by the English Cabinet—that the rejection of the Men-

chikoff Note was secured. At a later period, also, when the last propositions were drawn up by Counts Buol and Nesselrode, although Austria and Prussia were in favour of those propositions, and Lord Westmoreland himself said they might be received, the Earl of Clarendon wrote that our Government would not, upon any consideration have anything further to do with the Vienna Note. 'The rejection, first, of the amended Menchikoff Note, and then of the Olmütz Note, was a policy adopted solely by the Government of this country, and only concurred in, but not recommended, by the French Government and the other Governments of Europe. Whether this policy was right or wrong, there can be no doubt of the fact; and I am prepared to stake my reputation for accuracy and for a knowledge of the English language on this interpretation of the documents which have been laid before us. That being so, on what pretence could we expect that Austria should go to war in company with us for objects far beyond what she thought satisfactory at the beginning? or why should we ask the Emperor of the French to go to war for objects which he did not contemplate, and to insist on conditions which, in the month of September of last year, he thought wholly unnecessary?'

Mr. Bright next demonstrated, from a despatch by M. Drouyn de Lhuys, the French Foreign Minister, that the French Government had urged Russia to accept the Vienna Note, on the express ground that its general sense differed in nothing from the sense of the original propositions of Prince Menchikoff. Now, as the noble lord had said over and over again that the Government of England concurred in all the steps taken by that of France, could there be dissimulation more extraordinary, guilt more conclusive, than that this Government should act as it did, after it had recommended the Emperor of Russia to accept the Vienna Note? He maintained that we were making war against the Government which accepted our own terms of peace. 'I state this now only for the purpose of urging upon the House and upon the Government that you are bound at least, after making war for many months, to exact no further terms from the State with which you are at war than such as will give that security which at first you believed to be necessary; and that if you carry on a war for vengeance—if you carry on a war for conquest—if you carry on a war for purposes of Government at home, as many wars have been carried on in past times, I say you will be guilty of a heinous crime, alike in the eyes of God and of man.'

The hon. member rebuked Lord John Russell for the trifling charges which he was constantly bringing against the Russian Government, and animadverted upon the Cabinet generally for being dispersed in various parts of the country when calamities were falling upon the British army. 'The noble Lord President (Lord John Russell) was making a small speech on a great subject somewhere in Cumberland. At Bedford he descanted on the fate of empires, forgetting that there was nothing so likely to destroy an empire as unnecessary wars. At Bristol he was advocating a new History of England, which, if impartially written, I know not how the noble lord's policy for the last few months will show to posterity. The noble lord the member for Tiverton (Lord Palmerston) undertook a more difficult task—a labour left unaccomplished by Voltaire; and when he addressed the Hampshire peasantry, in one short sentence he overturned the New Testament and destroyed the foundations of the Christian religion.' From this sarcastic picture, Mr. Bright went on to speak of the losses which the war had already occasioned. 'We all know what we have lost in this House. Here, sitting near me, very often sat the member for Frome (Colonel Boyle). I met him a short time before he went out, at Mr. Westerton's, the bookseller, near Hyde Park Corner. I asked him whether he was going out. He answered, he was afraid he was; not afraid in the sense of personal fear—he knew not that; but he said, with a look and a tone I shall never forget, "It is no light matter for a man who has a wife and five little children." The stormy Euxine is his grave; his wife is a widow, his children fatherless. On the other side of the House sat a member, with whom I was not acquainted, who has lost his life; and another, of whom I knew something (Colonel Blair). Who is there that does not recollect his frank, amiable, and manly countenance? I doubt whether there were any men on either side of the House who were more capable of fixing the goodwill and affection of those with whom they were associated. Well, but the place that knew them shall know them no more for ever.' These were only two out of many cases which could be specified. Sorrow was spread over the whole country. He was in the House of Lords when the vote of thanks was moved. In the gallery were many ladies, three-fourths of whom were dressed in the deepest mourning. Was this nothing? No one supposed the Government wished to spread the pall of sorrow over the land, but they had a right to expect that they would at least discuss with becoming gravity

a subject the appalling consequences of which might come home to individuals and to the nation.

Then came Mr. Bright's peroration, as follows:—

'I recollect when Sir Robert Peel addressed the House on a dispute which threatened hostilities with the United States,—I recollect the gravity of his countenance, the solemnity of his tone, his whole demeanour showing that he felt in his soul the responsibility that rested on him. I have seen this, and I have seen the present Ministry. There was the buffoonery at the Reform Club. Was that becoming a matter of this grave nature? Has there been a solemnity of manner in the speeches heard in connection with this war, and have Ministers shown themselves statesmen and Christian men when speaking on a subject of this nature?

'It is very easy for the noble lord the member for Tiverton to rise and say that I am against war under all circumstances; and that if an enemy were to land on our shores, I should make a calculation as to whether it would be cheaper to take him in or keep him out, and that my opinion on this question is not to be considered either by Parliament or the country. I am not afraid of discussing the war with the noble lord on his own principles. I understand the Blue Books as well as he; and, leaving out all fantastic and visionary notions about what will become of us if something is not done to destroy or to cripple Russia, I say—and I say it with as much confidence as I ever said anything in my life—that the war cannot be justified out of these documents; and that impartial history will teach this to posterity if we do not comprehend it now.

'I am not, nor did I ever pretend to be, a statesman; and that character is so tainted and so equivocal in our day, that I am not sure that a pure and honourable ambition would aspire to it. I have not enjoyed, for thirty years, like these noble lords, the honours and emoluments of office. I have not set my sails to every passing breeze. I am a plain and simple citizen, sent here by one of the foremost constituencies of the empire, representing feebly, perhaps, but honestly, I dare aver, the opinions of very many, and the true interests of all those who have sent me here. Let it not be said that I am alone in my condemnation of this war, and of this incapable and guilty Administration. And even if I were alone, if mine were a solitary voice, raised amid the din of arms and the clamours of a venal press, I should have the consolation I have to-night—and which I trust will be mine to the last moment of my existence—the priceless consolation that no word of mine has tended to promote the squandering of my country's treasure or the spilling of one single drop of my country's blood.'

This speech was spoken under many disadvantages, but its effect was electrical. Mr. Bright was not only suffering from a severe cold, but he rose at one o'clock in the morning to address an audience holding in the main opposite views to his own. Several members interrupted him in his opening remarks, but these were at once silenced when the orator told them that although their functions were to cheer a Minister, they might at least have the decency not to interrupt a man giving honest expression to convictions of his own. The House was against him, but one who was present at the debate, says that Mr. Bright succeeded in securing 'the most deferential attention, deepening every instant, until it reached a climax

probably unparalleled in the recollection of any individual present, at least since the great affair between Canning and Brougham.' This extraordinary philippic 'was as superior to any mere Parliamentary vituperation as the subject itself—deep, solemn, momentous, and universal—was superior to the trivial and evanescent personalities that impart piquancy to individual exhibitors in the public arena. It was in vain that official callousness assumed an unconsciousness of its force. Before he had got half into the speech, every man on the Ministerial bench was in a state of acuteness such as is not witnessed in a lifetime in the same place. Almost all of them had turned round in their seats, and kept gazing at their terrible assailant with fatuous immobility. Lord John Russell tried desperately to be dignified, and covered his face with his hands, which he occasionally removed to attempt a spasmodic laugh; but when Mr. Bright came to talk of Colonel Boyle, and the widow and the five little orphans, the tears started to the eyes of many a brave man who heard him, and Lord John laughed no more.'

Lord Palmerston, at the outset of the speech, had pulled his hat over his eyes, folded his arms, and thrown himself back in his seat—a favourite attitude with him towards the end of a long sitting. But he was so completely roused by his antagonist, that he could not even feign an indifference which he did not feel. He tried to laugh when the speaker alluded to himself as upsetting the New Testament in a couple of sentences at an agricultural dinner. 'Short-lived, however, was the merriment. For presently Bright passed on to the "buffooneries at the Reform Club," and contrasted the general flippant levity of this Ministry, amidst the grief and mourning that then filled the land, with the grave decorum of Peel, even in the shadow of an anticipated war; and he laughed no more. As for Mr. Gladstone, he seemed much distressed. With the two exceptions, Disraeli and Graham, everybody was deeply affected. O'Connell's great test of his own speeches was the effect they produced on the reporters, and according to this test the speech of Mr. Bright was superlative, for the longest-lived of the short-lived gentry vowed that anything equal to it was quite out of his recollection.' . . . . 'It was strictly a debating speech, and all the Coalition could not furnish a debater to reply to it. The consternation of Ministers as they hurriedly whispered when Bright sat down, the painful silence (far more significant than the most tumultuous applause) that pervaded the benches, as if there had been affirmed some dread calamity for which there

was neither denial nor remedy—all told emphatically that Bright's point was *the* point.' It was beyond the power of any of the Ministers to make an effective reply to such a speech at the moment, and the House went to a division at once.

Parliament, having accomplished the special objects for which it was called together, adjourned on the 23d of December, for the Christmas holidays. But the festivities of the English Christmas of that melancholy year were overshadowed by gloom. Thousands of weary hearts were turned to the far-distant Crimea, where beloved relatives had either already perished, the victims of a sanguinary war, or were now dying of neglect, the result of mismanagement so gross and so terrible as probably to be unparalleled in the annals of the British empire.

CHAPTER XII.

RUSSIA AND THE CRIMEAN WAR (*concluded*).

The War at the beginning of 1855.—Condition of the English Army before Sebastopol.—Mr. Roebuck's Motion for a Select Committee.—Resignation of the Aberdeen Government.—A Palmerston Ministry formed.—Resignation of Mr. Gladstone, Sir J. Graham, and Mr. S. Herbert.—Ministerial Explanations.—Mr. Bright's eloquent appeal to Lord Palmerston to stay the War.—The struggle continues.—Mr. Bright defends the Peace Party.—Debates in the House of Commons on the prosecution of the War.—Important Speech by Mr. Bright.—Preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea.—Policy of the Government.—Attack on Lord John Russell.—Proposed Vote of Censure upon Ministers.—Animated Speech by Mr. Bright.—His extra-Parliamentary utterances on the War Question.—Close of the Crimean Campaign.—General Remarks upon Mr. Bright's attitude on the War.

PARLIAMENT met on the 23d of January, 1855, amidst much excitement and anxiety on the part of the nation. All were anxious to hear what was being done towards ameliorating the lot of our soldiers in the Crimea, and the whole conduct of the war was canvassed from various points of view. The general feeling, nevertheless, was still in favour of prosecuting the struggle with energy; and when Mr. Cobden addressed his constituents at Leeds, so strong was this sentiment that a resolution was carried against him. Neither the member for the West Riding, however, nor Mr. Bright, swerved from his opinions in consequence of such ebullitions of popular feeling. Speaking at Manchester at a *soiree* held in honour of himself and Mr. Gibson, Mr. Bright said, 'I behold the abyss into which multitudes would plunge the country. If I cannot save them from it, if they will not save themselves, at least I will warn them of their danger, and I will be no partner in the deeds which I am convinced in my conscience will receive, as they well merit, the condemnation of posterity.' Alluding at the annual meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to the general commercial consequences of the war, he showed that pauperism was increasing at a frightful rate, and that trade itself was not flourishing. He illustrated this by a humorous comparison. 'Some men,' he said, 'because they have got Government contracts, fancy that trade is good, and that war is good for trade. Why, it is but carrying on the trade of Roch-

dale, or Dewsbury, or anywhere else, by the taxation of the country at large; and it is just like somebody described it, endeavouring to keep a dog alive by feeding him with his own tail.'

Meanwhile the scandalous condition of things in the Crimea was brought formally under the attention of the House of Commons. Mr. Roebuck moved for the appointment of a Select Committee 'to inquire into the condition of our army before Sebastopol, and into the conduct of those departments of the Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the army.' Lord John Russell resigned office because he could not see how this motion was to be resisted. Mr. Gladstone, in an eloquent speech, opposed the inquiry because it would never take place as a real inquiry; or, if it did, because it would lead to nothing but confusion and disturbance, increased disaster, shame at home, and weakness abroad; because it could convey no consolation to those whom they sought to aid, while it would carry malignant joy to the hearts of the enemies of England. Ministers, however, found arrayed against them the large majority of 157 in a House of 453 members. The result of the division took every one by surprise, and instead of the usual cheering after the numbers were announced, a murmur of amazement was heard culminating in loud and derisive laughter.

The Aberdeen Government resigned in consequence of this vote, and Lord John Russell and Lord Derby having respectively failed to form a Ministry, on the 6th of February Lord Palmerston succeeded in this difficult task. His Administration, however, was chiefly composed of the members of the old Cabinet. The new Premier tried to stave off the action of the Sebastopol Inquiry Committee by promising a most stringent investigation into the conduct of the war. Sir James Graham, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Sidney Herbert shortly afterwards resigned office, and on the 23rd of February explained in the House of Commons why the appointment of the Crimean Inquiry Committee led to their withdrawal from Lord Palmerston's Ministry.

During the debate which arose out of these Ministerial explanations, Mr. Bright delivered another brief but earnest and eloquent speech, and one which contains a passage that is perhaps now more famous, and more frequently referred to, than any other in his public and Parliamentary addresses.

He began by observing that he was one of a majority of the House who looked upon our present position as one of more

than ordinary gravity, and he regretted the secession of the members who had withdrawn from the Government. But he would not take upon himself for a moment to condemn them, and he thought no one could have listened to the speech of Sir James Graham without being convinced that he and his retiring colleagues had been moved to the course they had taken by deliberate judgment, and upon honest grounds. He regretted their secession, however, because he did not like to see the Government of Lord Palmerston overthrown. For a month there had been a chaos in the region of administration; nothing could be more embarrassing and humiliating to this country, and the sentiment was not confined to these islands. We were at war with the greatest military power in the world; terms of peace had been agreed upon by this country and her allies; but there were writers in the public press, and members of Parliament, who had indulged dreams of vast political changes and conquests, and of a new map of Europe, as the objects of the war, and who urged the head of the Government to carry it on with vigour, and to prosecute enterprises which no Government could ever have seriously entertained. But he trusted that if our Government had offered terms of peace to Russia, we should not draw back and demand harder terms; and that if there should be a failure at Vienna, no man would impute to the rulers of this country that they had prolonged the war, and the infinite calamities of which it was the cause.

Mr. Bright next gave the reasons why he was anxious that the Government should not be overthrown. Whether in the right or the wrong, there were no men in the country more truly responsible for England's position in the war than Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell. They would not shrink from the responsibility attaching to them, and they were now placed in a situation favourable to the termination of the existing troubles. Lord John Russell was at Vienna, and he (Mr. Bright) entertained a sanguine hope that the result of his mission would be to bring about a peace. The speaker then asked whether, if there were good grounds for believing that the negotiations would prove successful, our representative had power to enter into an armistice. Some members cried 'No! no!' to this question, whereupon Mr. Bright said, 'I know not, Sir, who it is that says "No, no," but I should like to see any man get up and say that the destruction of 200,000 human lives lost on all sides during the course of this unhappy conflict is not a sufficient sacrifice. You are not pretending to conquer territory—you are not pretending to hold fortified or unforti-

fied towns; you have offered terms of peace which, as I understand them, I do not say are not moderate; and breathes there a man in this House or in this country whose appetite for blood is so insatiable that, even when terms of peace have been offered and accepted, he pines for that assault in which of Russian, Turk, French, and English, as sure as one man dies, 20,000 corpses will strew the streets of Sebastopol?'

After touching upon the disastrous influence which the war was having upon industry, and the condition of the country generally, the hon. member said there was at the same time growing up a bitter and angry feeling against the governing class. He deprecated political changes which were the result of passion, and not of deliberation and reason. He then alluded to the anxious feeling prevalent in the country as to the character of the news by the next mail from the East, and concluded with this now memorable passage, in which he made a strong and earnest appeal to Lord Palmerston:—

'The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two sideposts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on; he takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and the lowly, and it is on behalf of all these classes that I make this solemn appeal.

'I tell the noble lord, that if he be ready honestly and frankly to endeavour, by the negotiations about to be opened at Vienna to put an end to this war, no word of mine, no vote of mine, will be given to shake his power for one single moment, or to change his position in this House. (*Hear, hear.*) I am sure that the noble lord is not inaccessible to appeals made to him from honest motives and with no unfriendly feeling. The noble lord has been for more than forty years a member of this House. Before I was born, he sat upon the Treasury bench, and he has spent his life in the service of his country. He is no longer young, and his life has extended almost to the term allotted to man. I would ask, I would entreat the noble lord to take a course which, when he looks backs upon his whole political career—whatever he may therein find to be pleased with, whatever to regret—cannot but be a source of gratification to him. By adopting that course he would have the satisfaction of reflecting that, having obtained the object of his laudable ambition—having become the foremost subject of the Crown, the director of, it may be, the destinies of his country, and the presiding genius in her councils—he had achieved a still higher and nobler ambition: that he had returned the sword to the scabbard—that at his word torrents of blood had ceased to flow—that he had restored tranquillity to Europe, and saved this country from the indescribable calamities of war.' (*Loud cheers.*)

The fine and beautiful, yet withal simple, simile with which Mr. Bright introduced his peroration, thrilled every listener. The effect produced by the words in which he invoked the Ministry to stay the war has been described as almost awful, yet overwhelmingly tender. The appeal was made by the orator with slow and tremulous voice, but with manner digni-

fied and solemn, and a large number of members were visibly affected. The words in themselves are scarcely sufficient to account for this, but it is not language alone which makes true eloquence; time, occasion, fitness, sympathy, conviction—these have much to do with irresistibly enchaining an audience, and all these were in accord when Mr. Bright addressed the Premier in a strain never to be forgotten.

Lord Palmerston's Cabinet was reconstructed, and the hopes of peace were momentarily strengthened by the death of the Emperor Nicholas on the 2nd of March. His successor, Alexander, however, resolved upon prosecuting the war, the terms offered by Russia not having been accepted, and the allies against Russia were at this time reinforced by Sardinia. An attempt made to restore peace by a proposed Conference of the Great Powers at Vienna failed, and the conflict in the Crimea continued.

Mr. Bright spoke out of Parliament on several occasions at this juncture on the war question. At Manchester, on the 6th of March, he said: 'When I find men going about our streets laughing at us, ridiculing us, telling us that we are not patriotic, I ask if there had been somebody sixty years ago to take up this principle of non-intervention, and to adopt and carry it out in our Government, should we not have escaped that long and odious war, with its expenditure of fifteen hundred millons of money,—should we not have been free from the barbarism and degradation which now run riot over our population,—and should we not have stood, not by force of arms, but by force of character and true greatness, infinitely more the arbiter of Europe than we ever can be by the greatest fleets, or by the most powerful and enormous armies?' At another great meeting, held at Manchester in the month of April, he confessed that he bowed his head with shame when he looked back upon the follies and crimes of which the English nation had to his mind been guilty. And notwithstanding this feeling of shame and disgust, there appeared to be nothing doing on the part of the nation to bring the Government to a better course, and to extricate the country from its difficulties. 'We have a Government of lords,' said Mr. Bright, 'of hereditary persons who kindly undertake to rule this great nation, charging us £5,000 a year for each of these persons, and they consider it very often extremely impertinent if we make any comment upon the manner in which we are governed. Now, I am one of those who believe, notwithstanding that we have been foolish of late, that there is wisdom enough, manly strength

enough, power of intellect enough, morality enough in this country, to afford us a very much better Government than we have seen of late. Possibly, when we take matters a little more into our own hands, we may find that the national affairs can be managed somewhat better than they have been of recent years.'

On the 24th of May, Mr. Disraeli submitted a motion to the House of Commons expressive of the dissatisfaction of the House at the ambiguous language and uncertain conduct of Her Majesty's Government in reference to the great question of peace or war. An amendment was moved by Sir F. Baring, simply expressing regret that the Conferences at Vienna had not led to a termination of hostilities. Mr. Disraeli's motion was rejected by a majority of 319 to 219. The debate was continued over the Whitsuntide recess, on an amendment proposed by Mr. Lowe, declaring that the refusal of Russia to restrict the strength of her navy in the Black Sea had exhausted the means of suspending hostilities by negotiation. The three most important speeches during the debate were those of Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton, Mr. Bright, and Lord Palmerston.

Mr. Bright's address, delivered on the fifth night of the debate, was especially comprehensive, dealing in the fullest manner with the whole question of the prosecution of the war. This speech occupies nearly thirty columns of *Hansard*, and it was acknowledged on all hands to have been one of much force and point. Mr. Bright began by observing that the basis for discussion was furnished by these points—the object of the war, whether that object had or had not been sufficiently accomplished, and whether there was anything in prospect likely to be gained that would justify the Government and the House in proceeding further with the war. The avowed object of the war was simply to secure the Turkish territory from the grasp of Russia, and perhaps from that of other Powers. It had been distinctly declared by the Government that we were not at war for nationalities, or for conquest, or for crippling Russia, or for dismemberment. Lord John Russell had stated this. Lord Palmerston had turned the cold shoulder to Hungary, and Lord John Russell had told the House that it was quite a mistake to suppose that he ever intended to go to war for Poland. Having got rid of Hungary and Poland, it only now required some member of the Cabinet to get up and state that it was utterly impossible for this country to involve itself in hostilities with a view to the regeneration of any part of Italy. With regard to the present war there was general mys-

tification, and at that moment almost every man was in the dark as to the ultimate objects of the war. The simple question was, considering the condition in which Turkey had long existed, what were the means by which the security of Turkey could be guaranteed: that security could not be absolute; it must be partial and conditional. He assumed that the terms offered to Russia at Vienna were offered sincerely and in earnest; then, the question was whether those terms, called bases, contained a sufficient guaranteee for the integrity of Turkey, bases being capable of development. He would not go through all the 'Four Points,' because the attention of the House ought really to be centred upon the third article and the matters connected with it. 'The House must remember that this article involves two most important subjects—first, the territorial guarantee, which if it were sufficiently secured would be everything the House and the country required from the war—namely, that the territories of Turkey shall never be molested, so long as the treaty shall continue, by any of the great Powers who are parties to such treaty; and, secondly, that the preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea shall cease. Now, the territorial guarantee was granted without difficulty.' As to the question of the Christian protectorate, if the proposition of Russia had been correctly stated, and assuming the abolition of the Menchikoff Note and the old protectorate treaties, surely the House would consider whether the combination of the three propositions—the territorial guarantees, the Christian protectorate, and the Black Sea project—did not give such securities to Turkey as the condition of Turkey would permit.

Discussing next the preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea, Mr. Bright observed that his friend Mr. Cobden had clearly shown that this preponderance was in a certain sense a fact which all the negotiations in the world could not write off. They were concerned with the question, how was that preponderance to cease? but he must contend against the proposition of Lord John Russell, which, instead of merely reducing the preponderance of Russia in the Black Sea, would transfer the supremacy in that sea from Russia. Some hon. gentlemen talked as if Russia were a Power which you could take to Bow Street, and bind over before some stipendiary magistrate to keep the peace for six months. He was of opinion, with respect to the first proposition of Russia, that it was for the true interests of Europe and of Turkey herself that the Straits should be open, which would put a stop to the preponderance

of Russia in the Euxine. There would be no sort of pretence for wrangling about the Straits; and the balance of power—if he might use the term—between the fleets of Russia, France, and England, would be probably the best guarantee that could be offered for the security of Constantinople and Turkey, so far as they were in danger of aggression either from the Black Sea or the Mediterranean. The second proposition was that the Straits should be closed, but that the Sultan might open them at will; and he asked the House whether, assuming that there was any difference between either of these proposals and that of the Government, the difference was worse than the incalculable calamities which war must bring upon the country, and whether the Government were justified in breaking off the negotiations. As to the coercion of Russia, if any diplomatist from this country, under the same circumstances as Russia was placed in, had consented to terms such as the noble lord had endeavoured to force upon Russia, he (the speaker) maintained that if he entered the door of that House, he would be met by one universal shout of execration, and as a public man would be ruined for ever. 'I am of opinion that with the territorial guarantee and the abolition of the Christian protectorate, either the terms proposed by the noble Lord or by Prince Gortchakoff would have been as secure for Turkey as it is possible under existing circumstances for Turkey to be by any treaty between the Great Powers of Europe.'

Mr. Bright next traced the cost of the war already to this country in blood and treasure, and continued: 'Hon. members may think this is nothing. They say it is a "low" view of the case. But these things are the foundation of your national greatness, and of your national duration; and you may be following visionary phantoms in all parts of the world while your own country is becoming rotten within, and calamities may be in store for the monarchy and the nation, of which now, it appears, you take no heed. Every man connected with trade knows how much trade has suffered, how much profits in every branch of trade—except in contracts arising out of the war—have diminished, how industry is becoming more precarious and the reward for industry less, how the price of food is raised, and how much there is of a growing pressure on all classes, especially upon the poorest of the people—a pressure which by-and-by—not just now, when the popular frenzy is lashed into fury morning after morning by the newspapers—[*murmurs*]—but I say by-and-by this discontent will grow rapidly, and you (*pointing to the Ministerial bench*) who now fancy you are ful-

filling the behests of the national will, will find yourselves pointed to as the men who ought to have taught the nation better.' He would not enter into the question of the harvest, but he trusted it might not fail, for then we should have, in addition to the calamities of war, calamities arising from a scarcity of food.

He had no confidence whatever in Her Majesty's Government, and there were many men on both sides who wished that at this critical moment the affairs of the country were under the guidance of men of greater solidity and of better judgment. Mr. Bright instanced in proof of this the policy of Lords Russell and Palmerston towards Austria. They knew perfectly well that if Austria were to join either with Russia on the one hand, or with the Western Powers on the other, in all human probability that great empire would no longer remain the 'great conservative Power in the midst of Europe,' but would be stripped on the one side of her Italian provinces, and of Hungary on the other; or, if not stripped of these two portions of the empire, would be plunged into an interminable anarchy which would prove destructive of her power. With regard to the French alliance, so far as the war was concerned, it depended upon one life. The existing French dynasty might be a permanent or an ephemeral one, and it behoved us to consider the ground on which we were standing. Lord Clarendon had told us, with regard to Russia, that Europe was standing on a mine, and did not know it; but Lord Clarendon by his blunders had placed England on a mine far more dangerous and destructive. It was frightful, too, to be now told by Lord John Russell that we were not fighting for ourselves, but for Germany. Twenty-seven millions of people living in these islands were to come forward as the defenders of the sixty millions of people in Germany, in a contest in which we had no interest!

The hon. member further said that the vast sacrifices we had already made touched the very foundations of our national greatness and our national duration. He also contrasted at length the financial and commercial condition of the United States of America with that of this country, which showed a balance of taxation of £70,000,000 a year in favour of the former, suggesting the effect which this fact might have in removing capital from this country to America. 'Sir, six years of this war, at an annual expenditure of £70,000,000, give £420,000,000 to the side of the United States as against the condition of the people of this country. Am I, then, talking of trifles? Am I talking to sane men, that it is necessary to

bring forward facts like these? I am amazed, when the newspaper press, when public speakers, when gentlemen on both sides of this house are so ready to listen and to speak upon questions relating to Turkey, to Servia, or to Schamyl, that I cannot get the House of Commons to consider a question so great as the expenditure of £420,000,000, and when we have to consider if we shall trust that vast issue in the hands of the noble lords and right hon. gentlemen on the Treasury bench.'

Mr. Bright next commented upon the utterances—sometimes contradictory—of the various Ministers in connection with the war, justifying his want of confidence in them. He first referred to Sir William Molesworth, Mr. Gladstone, and Sir Charles Wood, and after showing why he considered they had forfeited confidence, he proceeded to remark severely upon the conduct of Lords Palmerston and Russell, whom he held responsible for the policy of the war. Lord John Russell had been especially injudicious, and while Lord Aberdeen was honestly endeavouring to secure peace, the noble lord was taking a course which rendered statesmanship valueless. Mr. Bright pursued his attack with animation:—

'The noble lord, however, at last brought his conduct to a climax. The hon. and learned member for Sheffield (Mr. Roebuck) came forward as a little David—(*laughter*)—with sling and stone—weapons which he did not even use, but at the sight of which the Whig Goliath went howling and vanquished to the back benches. (*Loud cheers and renewed laughter.*)

'I am afraid, Sir, to trust myself to speak of the conduct of the noble lord on that occasion. I presume that we shall have to wait for the advent of that Somersetshire historian whose coming the noble lord expects, before we know whether his conduct on that occasion was, what some persons still call it, treachery to his chief, or whether it arose from that description of moral cowardice which in every man is the death of all true statesmanship. (*Loud cheers.*) But in the year 1852 the noble lord the member for London gave me a strong reason why I should feel no confidence in his present chief. The House will remember that he then ejected the First Minister under whom he now serves from the Cabinet of which he himself was then the head, and in the explanation which he made to the House he told us that men like Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne, men of age, of authority, and experience, had been able in some degree to control his noble friend, but that he, being younger than the noble lord, and having been a shorter time on the political stage, had found it difficult to control him. The description which the noble lord might give of his colleague is a little like that which we occasionally see given of a runaway horse—that he got the bit between his teeth, and there was no holding him.' (*Laughter*)

The hon. member, having further illustrated what he regarded as the blundering policy of Lord John Russell, said that as regarded Lord Palmerston, he had often opposed him, because he treated all these great questions with a want of seriousness that showed strong convictions upon them to be

lacking in him. But the House was now in the hands of the two noble lords, who were the authors of the war, and who were supreme in the Cabinet. 'They have carried on the war. They have, however, not yet crippled Russia, although it is generally admitted that they have almost destroyed Turkey. They have not yet saved Europe in its independence and civilization; they have only succeeded in convulsing it. They have not added to the honour and renown of England, but they have placed the honour and renown of this country in peril. The country has been, I am afraid, the sport of their ancient rivalry, and I should be very sorry if it should be the victim of the policy which they have so long advocated.' Mr. Bright again referred to the terrible pressure which the war caused upon the people of this country. The House must know that the people were misled and bewildered, and every member ought boldly to say so, and thus place it out of the power of the press to mislead the country as it had done for the last twelve months. He asked, in conclusion, 'If they are thus misled and bewildered, is it not the duty of this House to speak with the voice of authority in this hour of peril? We are the depositaries of the power and the guardians of the interests of a great nation and of an ancient monarchy. Why should we not fully measure our responsibility? Why should we not disregard the small-minded ambition that struggles for place? and why should we not, by a faithful, just, and earnest policy, restore, as I believe we may, tranquillity to Europe and prosperity to the country so dear to us?'

At the conclusion of the debate on the 8th of June, Mr. Lowe's amendment was negatived, and Sir F. Baring's amendment accepted, without a division.

On the following day, speaking at the Trinity House banquet, Prince Albert said that Constitutional Government was undergoing a heavy trial; and he called upon the country to show a patriotic confidence in the Ministry. The Sebastopol Committee having reported, Mr. Roebuck brought forward a vote of censure upon Ministers. Sir E. Bulwer Lytton also gave notice of a motion censuring Lord John Russell, whereupon the latter anticipated its effect by resigning. Mr. Roebuck's resolution came to the vote on the 19th of July, when the 'previous question' was carried by 289 to 182 votes. Many animated speeches were made in the course of the debate, Mr. Bright again speaking with much power.

He began by expressing his acquiescence in the report of the Sebastopol Committee, and insisting that the House were

bound to take proceedings upon it. The motion was evidently directed against Lord Palmerston and the existing Government, because Mr. Roebuck had excluded three members of the late Government by his highflown compliments; and if Lord John Russell had escaped, it was because when he found that his confederates were going to be captured he turned king's evidence. After the laughter which this remark occasioned had subsided, Mr. Bright turned upon Lord Palmerston, whose warlike propensities he severely condemned. He also inveighed against the ignorant and profligate press, in obedience to whose dictates Ministers had ordered the expedition to the Crimea, quoting the words of Kossuth—'a poor exile who has not £5,000 a year'—to show that Ministers might have known the expedition would fail; and hinting that a clamour had been got up in the press to drive Lord John Russell from his convictions, and cause the rejection of the Austrian terms. But there had been also a cabal against him within doors:—

'The noble lord made a reference to it in his speech, and I confess that I sympathised with him in the expressions which he then used. I should like to know where the ten or a dozen subordinates of the Government met. (*Cheers.*) Was it upstairs? Was it downstairs? (*Laughter.*) Was it in the cellar sacred to Guy Fawkes? (*Renewed laughter.*) Was it in a sewer?—(*laughter*)—for there it certainly should have been if it was intended that the locality should harmonize with the objects of the meeting. (*Renewed laughter and cheers.*) I am told that there were civilians there and lawyers—civilians trembling for their places—lawyers in terror lest the death of some judge should find them sitting on that (the Opposition) side of the House. (*Laughter and cheers.*) It was a saying of the late Lord Stowell, speaking of the effects of ambition, that "ambition breaks the ties of blood and forgets the obligations of gratitude." Here we have men who owe to the patronage and favour of the noble lord their partial emergence from Parliamentary obscurity, and they have joined in this disreputable and contemptible cabal against him. (*Loud cheers.*) The noble lord at the head of the Government did not satisfy my notion of what was right in the observations he made the other night on this question. . . . He was willing to repeat what Sir Robert Walpole said when he prevailed on Mr. Pulteney to accept a peerage: "I have turned the key of the closet on him." He appeared as if conscious that he had got rid of his ancient rival, and was about to start anew without competition on the floor of the House as leader of the Whig party.' (*Cheers.*)

Mr. Bright's renewed attack on Lord Palmerston was very spirited. Referring to the latter's speech on the preceding Monday, he exclaimed, 'What a speech it was! I appeal to every member of this House, except the members of the cabal that ejected the noble lord the member for London from office,—I appeal to every other member of the House, whether, if they look back to the times of Sir Robert Peel, of the noble lord

(Russell), or of the right hon. member for Bucks (Mr. Disraeli), they do not find in each of those cases something to admire, while at the same time they must see in the conduct of the noble lord the member for Tiverton something to humiliate them, and which they must inevitably condemn.' (*Loud cheers.*) The cheering was renewed, this time mingled with laughter, when Mr. Bright, still referring to Lord Palmerston, said that the Queen might make a Prime Minister, but it was not in royalty to make a statesman. If the waters were smooth, if the sky were clear, he could have no confidence in the noble lord; but the waters were not smooth, the sky was not clear —never less so. We were at a critical hour of the national career. 'He seems to me to be insensible to the fact that the clouds are gathering round the horizon of this country; he appears not to know that his policy is the doom of death to thousands upon thousands, carrying desolation to the homes of England, and sorrow to millions of hearts. He may perchance never see that which comes often to my vision, the interminable ghastly procession of our slaughtered countrymen, to which every day fresh lists of victims are added. I see these things, I speak in apprehension of them, and in their presence I have no confidence in the noble lord, whose conduct is, I believe, humiliating to the House and full of peril to the country.' (*Loud cheers.*)

The sympathy of the public went with the hon. member for Manchester in his vigorous denunciation of Lord Palmerston's conduct towards his late colleague, although the country was not at one with him upon the general war question.

With this trenchant address we read the end of Mr. Bright's Parliamentary utterances on the Crimean war. But before peace was concluded he spoke on many occasions out of the House on this question. In October, 1855, he attended a meeting at Rochdale, called for the purpose of making a presentation to Mr. Sharman Crawford, the late member for the borough, and in the course of his speech made some references to his own opinions on the war. He had attacked the press, he said, but fairly and honestly, and of course he would be abused by the press. He reminded his hearers that in the great war with France at the commencement of the century, the English press had made it impossible for the Government to preserve the peace. The eleven years of war made hundreds of thousands of beggars and criminals within the United Kingdom, and every hundred pounds now which the Chancellor of the Exchequer took in taxes for the present war was making also its pauper or its

criminal. 'The (Crimean) war may be honourable, but I assure you that those little children of yours who are now ornamenting your homes and gladdening your hearts, when they grow up to be men and women, and look back to the history of the times through which we are now passing, will have wonderful difficulty to discover in the restoration of Mohammedan power, or the humiliation of Russia, or the glory of the British arms, anything that can compensate them for the crushing taxes from which they can only escape by emigrating from a country which should have afforded them a happy home during their lives.'

At Hulme, and at Marsden, on other occasions, Mr. Bright affirmed his desire for legislation based upon just, moral, and Christian principles. He did not believe in the grand schemes of policy advanced by kings, queens, or cabinets, which flew in the face of almost ordinary resolutions of Christian morality; and there was no greater evil that came from a condition of national twilight than that we were always getting into a state of panic. When the hon. member and Mr. Milner Gibson addressed their constituents in the Manchester Corn Exchange on the 28th of January, 1856, Mr. Bright ridiculed the phrase 'the defence of the liberties of Europe,' which Lord John Russell had borrowed from the King's speech in the time of William III. 'The balance of power,' was another admirable phrase, which no man living had ever understood, or succeeded in defining. It would last until men grew wiser, and found there was nothing whatever in it. It was like hunting for the philosopher's stone, or perpetual motion. They had been living under a government of old, old lords since 1688; and they would not have been able to sleep in their beds, if those who managed the affairs of the country were also the managers of their private affairs. Amidst general laughter and cheering, he quoted these lines from Ben Jonson:—

> 'Hood an ass with reverend purple,
> So you can hide his two ambitious ears,
> And he shall pass for a Cathedral Doctor.'

Who would say that the rulers of the United States were not as good rulers as the average monarchs of this country, or of the rest of Europe? For himself and his friends, Mr. Bright said that they would continue to confront unflinchingly all the batteries that ridicule or malice might point against them.

There is no need for us to trace further the progress of the Crimean war, the facts being within the recollection of all

readers of English history of the present generation. Suffice it to state that the allies were victorious, and that on the 30th of March, 1856, the treaty of peace was signed. There are many, however, who on this matter will take up the language of the ballad in which Southey makes old Kaspar describe the battle of Blenheim,—

'But what good came of it at last?
Quoth little Peterkin;—
Why, that I cannot tell, said he,
But 'twas a famous victory.'

It is no part of our duty to attempt to define in what degree English statesmen were wrong and Mr. Bright was right—or *vice versa*—in the Crimean war. There are few, however, who now defend that war from its inception to its close; while Mr. Bright and those who agreed with him have only been confirmed in their original views with the lapse of time. It has been our object rather to put the reader in possession of full information from Mr. Bright's own lips of his attitude and convictions upon this great question; and upon this information we must leave him to form his own judgment. But one lesson may be gathered by the friends and opponents alike of this eminent statesman, from the consistent and upright conduct which he pursued throughout the struggle. This lesson was well indicated by Mr. Gladstone in a speech delivered in Birmingham, twenty years after the conclusion of the conflict with Russia, when he said that we ought all to be ready to make sacrifices, as Mr. Bright showed himself to be ready, at the time of the Crimean war, to lay his popularity as a sacrifice upon the altar of his duty. It is sometimes difficult, even when our convictions support us, to dare to be in the right with two or three. Mr. Bright did this, nevertheless, in a cause which he believed to be right, and his courage and honesty will continue to draw forth, in consequence, a tribute of admiration from all classes, including those who are separated from him in political sentiment and opinion.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. BRIGHT'S FIRST ILLNESS.—REJECTION AT MANCHESTER.

Mr. Bright's Illness in 1856.—Visits to Scotland, Algiers, and Nice.—Interesting Interview with the Empress of Russia.—Mr. Bright visits Rome and Switzerland.—Offers to resign his Seat for Manchester.—The offer not accepted.—The Palmerston Government defeated on the Chinese question.—Mr. Bright in accord with Mr. Cobden.—Dissolution of Parliament.—The Election for Manchester.—Messrs. Bright and Gibson defeated by a Coalition.—Opinion of the Press on the Election.—Mr. Bright's Farewell Address to his late Constituents.—His temporary Retirement from Public Life.

The anxieties of several critical and memorable years began to tell upon Mr. Bright, and in January, 1856, he became ill. There was thorough prostration of the nervous system, the result of the arduous nature of his public duties, combined with the excitement arising from the war with Russia. Nevertheless, he went up to London at the opening of Parliament, hoping to be able to bear some part in the work of the session, but he was compelled to return home.

In the month of March, Lord Brougham generously offered the use of his villa at Cannes to Mr. Bright and his family until the following winter. The offer, however, which was conveyed through Mr. Cobden, was gratefully declined. Mr. Bright went to Ben Rhydding, a well-known hydropathic establishment in Yorkshire, where he spent two months. Not deriving the benefit he expected from this, he then went down to Scotland, and spent several months in the Highlands, fishing in its lochs and rivers. Some weeks were spent at Glengarry, on the invitation of his kind friend Mr. Edward Ellice, the member for Coventry. In the autumn, Mr. Bright paid a visit to Lord Aberdeen, at Haddo House, in Aberdeenshire. It may be stated here that the subject of our biography always recognized the earnest efforts made by Lord Aberdeen to secure peace before the outbreak of the Crimean war, and he was a statesman whom, in many respects, he held in high regard.

In the month of November, Mr. Bright left England for Algiers, and spent some weeks in the French colony. He afterwards visited Italy, in company with his eldest daughter, who went out from England to join him.

At Nice, in January, 1857, Mr. Bright had an interesting interview with the Empress of Russia, the wife of the Emperor Nicholas, and grandmother of the present Emperor. The Empress, hearing of his arrival in Nice, sent Baron Meyendorf to ask him to call upon her, which he accordingly did—in company with his daughter—on the Russian New Year's Day.

The Empress gave her reasons why she wished to see him, and said, 'I know you have been just to my country.'

Mr. Bright replied that he wished to be, and thought he had been, just to both countries.

The Empress spoke with much feeling, saying that she could never understand why England should have made war upon Russia. Her Majesty spoke English, though not fluently.

Baron Meyendorf, who was one of the attached servants of the Empress, lost his son at the siege of Sebastopol; and as he mentioned his loss to Mr. Bright, the tears coursed down his cheeks. Speaking of the Empress after the interview, he said, 'The Empress is so good,—I love her as my mother.'

From Nice, Mr. Bright went by way of Geneva to Civita Vecchia and Rome. In the 'Eternal City' he stayed about two months—that is, until the middle of March, and then he went north to Florence and Venice, and thence to Milan and Turin. At Turin he had a long and interesting conversation with the celebrated Italian statesman Count Cavour, chiefly relating to the Emperor of the French, and the manner in which the Treaty of Paris had been concocted in the preceding year.

Going next by the Italian lakes, Mr. Bright passed over the Simplon into Switzerland, where Mrs. Bright joined him for a short tour. Upon its conclusion, in the month of July, they returned to England. The right hon. gentleman found his health much improved after his prolonged absence from England.

During the absence of Mr. Bright upon the Continent, important political events had been transpiring in England; but before tracing these, some mention must be made of the hon. member's relations with his Manchester constituency. Feeling that so important a city should enjoy a more active and vigorous representation than he could hope to give it for some time to come, Mr. Bright wrote a letter to his committee, before leaving England for the Continent, in which he said, 'I have consulted physicians of extensive practice and eminent in

their profession, and their opinions all concur in this, that a complete rest from labour for a longer period is necessary, and that this it is believed will give me renewed health and strength. Acting upon this advice, which my own judgment entirely approves, I am about to leave home for some months, and shall, therefore, in all probability, not be able to attend the House of Commons during the next session of Parliament.' Mr. Bright consequently offered to resign his seat for Manchester.

His letter was laid before a meeting of the Liberal electors of Manchester on the 30th of January, 1857, and on the motion of Mr. George Wilson, the following resolution was carried: 'That this meeting expresses its profound regret at the circumstances which unhappily necessitate the absence of its esteemed representative, Mr. John Bright, and desires to record its unabated confidence in his signal ability, and the high moral courage, universally acknowledged, with which he has hitherto represented this great metropolis of industry in Parliament; that it hereby begs respectfully to express its admiration of the undeviating consistency and unflinching firmness with which he has adhered to those great principles on which he was elected, as well as its warmest gratitude for the eminent services which he has rendered to the nation; that while deeply sympathizing with him under the serious indisposition which has compelled him to retire for a season from public duties, it derives sincere satisfaction from the prospect that he will be able ere long to re-enter upon them; and that while cheerfully conceding to him the interval of repose which may be necessary for the complete restoration of his health, it requests him to allow the continuance of his Parliamentary connection with this city, in the earnest hope that the cause of popular rights, of social progress, and of international concord may soon regain the assistance of his disinterested and distinguished advocacy in the House of Commons.' The resolution was carried unanimously with every demonstration of applause, and in the course of the proceedings Mr. Bazley and Mr. Milner Gibson paid a high tribute to the hon. member's eloquence, and his undaunted moral and political courage.

In March, 1857, the Palmerston Government suffered a defeat in connection with the serious rupture with China. The circumstances of the quarrel may be briefly narrated. A lorcha called the *Arrow*, showing British colours, had been seized by the Chinese, and the question arose whether it was entitled to the protection of the British flag. In the course of a debate in the House of Lords, Lord Derby insisted that it could have no

such claim, and adduced statements made by Sir John Bowring, our representative, to the effect that the license to carry the English flag had expired some time before. His lordship also affirmed that the quarrel had arisen through Sir J. Bowring's absorbing desire to bring about his own official reception at Canton. Lord Derby's motion was lost, there being a majority against it of 36; but in the Commons, a motion condemning the Government had a different result.

This resolution, which was brought forward by Mr. Cobden on the 26th of February, ran as follows: 'That this House has heard with concern of the conflicts which have occurred between the British and Chinese authorities on the Canton River; and, without expressing an opinion as to the extent to which the Government of China may have afforded this country cause of complaint respecting the non-fulfilment of the Treaty of 1842, this House considers that the papers which have been laid upon the table fail to establish satisfactory grounds for the violent measures resorted to at Canton in the late affair of the *Arrow;* and that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the state of our commercial relations with China.' After a debate extending over four nights, in which the high legal opinion of Mr. Phillimore went completely against the Government, Mr. Cobden's motion was carried by 263 to 247 votes, thus showing a majority of 16 against the Government. Lord Palmerston thereupon decided to dissolve Parliament, but Mr. Cobden asked what was to be done in the meantime respecting the quarrel with China. Some one, he said, should be at once sent out to supersede all present British authority in China. Sir George Grey, on behalf of the Government, said that they would do all in their power to protect British subjects and their property in China.

Mr. Bright was, as we have seen, abroad, when this debate took place, but it was well known that had he been present in the House of Commons he would have voted with the majority, and in condemnation of the war. Nor was it alone on the question of the lorcha *Arrow* that Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and those who sympathized with them, were dissatisfied with the course of the Government. They were opposed to its whole policy in respect to China, as being unnecessarily aggressive, and as tending disastrously to impair the commercial and friendly intercourse between the two countries. They regarded the Chinese wars of the period as opposed to the true spirit of humanity.

In view of the impending general election, the Manchester

Liberal Committee met in the Free Trade Hall, and unanimously selected as their candidates the sitting members, Mr. Bright and Mr. Milner Gibson. Mr. Bright, in a letter to Mr. G. Wilson, dated Rome, March 8, had written stating that, although he could not at present return to England, his health was sensibly improving; and he added, 'I have consulted some friends here whom I know, and they are altogether unwilling to entertain the idea that the state of my health now is a sufficient reason why I should withdraw; and I should say the same, did not I know how often we are biassed by our wishes in deciding questions in which we are deeply interested. After much consideration, I have come to the conclusion, in which, perhaps, nothing is absolutely concluded—for after stating the case fairly I must leave it in other hands—that the interests of the constituency, that is, of the Liberal majority, and the welfare of the Liberal cause, must in reality decide the question. Do not, for a moment even, put my feelings, or position, or prospects in the scale against what is best for the interest and reputation of the constituency of Manchester. If there is a wish that I should stand as a candidate at this election, and if it be thought that the something of uncertainty as to my health, and my unavoidable absence from England at this moment, will not prevent my return if I am brought forward, then I am willing to offer myself for re-election. If, on the contrary, many persons should doubt my being able, again to return to public life, and if they should be unwilling that one of their representatives should be so long absent from the House,—if they should show a coldness because I am not present to assist in the contest, and to such an extent as to make the election a difficult and doubtful one, then I think you will do your duty to me and to the constituency by not allowing my name to appear. I am sure you will decide for the best, and I shall be entirely satisfied with the result.' But the committee determined to nominate Mr. Bright.

A great meeting of the Liberal electors was held on the 18th of March in the Free Trade Hall, when Mr. Milner Gibson delivered an address, and a vote of thanks was passed to the two members for the city for their past services, as well as a resolution pledging the meeting to use every lawful means to return them again to the House of Commons. Mr. Cobden spoke warmly on behalf of his friend, observing that no two human beings ever enjoyed together a more transparent intimacy of mind than himself and Mr. Bright. There was scarcely a view, or a thought, or an aspiration which they did not possess in

common, though Mr. Bright had an ability and an eloquence to which he (Mr. Cobden) could make no pretensions. 'I say,' continued the speaker, 'you have not the character, the fame, or the destinies of Mr. Bright in your hands, but I will tell you this, that your own character and reputation are at stake. I will tell you what I heard one of the oldest and most sagacious men in the House of Commons say—that he did not believe there was any man in the House, with the exception of Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone, who ever changed votes by their eloquence. Now that is a great tribute to pay to a man. Although we, many of us, may probably convince people by our arguments, we do not convert them and make them change their votes. It requires logic and reasoning power, but it requires something else—it requires those transcendent powers of eloquence which your representative possesses.' Mr. Cobden concluded by recapitulating Mr. Bright's services in connection with the increase in the register, the question of Free Trade, etc., and asked who had benefited so much by the efforts of the 'Manchester School' as Manchester itself.

The nomination took place in St. Ann's Square, in the presence of some twenty thousand persons. The candidates nominated were Sir John Potter, Mr. James Aspinall Turner, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Milner Gibson. Sir J. Potter and Mr. Turner were Palmerstonian Liberals; and as no Conservative candidates were brought forward, they received the whole strength of the Conservative vote, as well as the support of the Whigs, and those Liberals who were in favour of Lord Palmerston's policy. Mr. Bright's brother-in-law, Mr. Vaughan, spoke on his behalf; and the other three candidates addressed the immense assemblage. The show of hands was declared to be in favour of Mr. Bright and Sir John Potter. On the following day, however, the result of the poll showed that the coalition of parties had been too strong for the old members. The numbers were,—for Sir John Potter, 8,368; Mr. J. A. Turner, 7,854; Mr. Milner Gibson, 5,588; and Mr. John Bright, 5,458.

While Mr. Bright's active participation in the contest might have greatly modified these figures, it was no doubt beyond his power to change the result. Owing to a variety of causes, Lord Palmerston was very popular in the country, a strong idea being prevalent in favour of what was regarded as his spirited and patriotic foreign policy. He enjoyed, moreover, all the prestige attaching to the successful conclusion of the Crimean war, while exaggerated reports of fearful atrocities committed by the

Chinese came opportunely to his aid, and thus bore favourably upon the very policy for which he had been condemned by the House of Commons. Many other prominent opponents of the Ministry lost their seats on this occasion. Mr. Cobden, who left the West Riding to contest Huddersfield, was defeated; Mr. Layard was beaten at Aylesbury, and Mr. Fox at Oldham; and the ranks of the Peelites were considerably thinned. Lord Palmerston obtained an increased majority in the elections.

As in the case of Mr. Gladstone and Oxford University at a later period, the distinguished services of Mr. Bright were disregarded; and the electors of Manchester, unwilling to yield independence on one or two important questions, preferred to elect respectable but unknown politicians to those whose talents had shed lustre upon the city. Mr. Bright's defeat was more keenly felt by the country generally than any other which marked the course of the elections. The press, also, including that portion of it which had been most strongly opposed to Mr. Bright, expressed regret at his temporary exclusion from the House of Commons.*

* From a great number of articles which appeared in the daily and weekly journals, we take the following extracts. The *Times*, referring to Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, said: 'For ten years we have opposed these two gentlemen in well-nigh every act of their public life, and yet now we must honestly say that we deeply regret to see erased from the roll-call of the House of Commons the names of Mr. John Bright and Mr. Richard Cobden.' The *Daily News* observed that 'the town which has won with such effect so great a fame in the electoral field, now sinks back into insignificance, preferring local thrift to the world-wide honour of being represented by the most distinguished men in Parliament, and in that insignificance Manchester may be left for the present, while others draw the moral which is yielded by the defeat of the peace party in all directions.' 'In Bright,' remarked the *Saturday Review*, 'Parliament has lost one of its ablest orators and brightest ornaments, and these are not times in which such losses are easily repaired. The greatest danger to our institutions is to be looked for in the deterioration of the character and ability of their representative body. It may be very convenient for an Administration to rule with undisputed sway over submissive mediocrities; but if the standard of ability in the House of Commons should ever be permanently degraded in public estimation, the end of Parliamentary government will not be far off.' The *Manchester Examiner and Times*, after remarking that a little trimming on the part of Mr. Bright would have ensured him an undisturbed popularity, said: 'He has maintained the same uncompromising independence towards great and small, Ministers and people, the blandishments of aristocratic favour, or the acclamation of the populace. Yet his heart was not destitute of ambition. Yes, his was the ambition to check the abuses of the Executive, to urge a righteous and beneficent policy upon the Government, to stand forth as the dauntless champion of the rights of the people, to infuse into our dealings with other nations that justice and that generosity which alone become a Christian state, and to harmonize the institutions of England with what is due to the welfare and progress of mankind. He has never deviated a hair's breadth from the accomplishment of these objects.' 'We are bound to say,' observed the *Dublin University Magazine*, 'strongly as we differ

After the close of the poll, a Liberal meeting was held at Newall's Buildings. Mr. George Wilson, who presided, said that Mr. John Bright was almost the only man the cotton districts had produced who had become famous, not only in the House of Commons, but in the world; and it was sad to think that Manchester, which had been represented by such men as Mr. Bright and Mr. Gibson, possessing such ability—and without proving one single accusation against them, or showing that they had deviated in the least iota from their principles—should exhibit such a change of feeling as they had seen that day. Mr. Jacob Bright said he believed his brother would rather have been the representative of a large constituency in Lancashire than have taken any official position, whatever dignity it might

from the late policy of these great Manchester twins, that neither their honour nor their motives are assailable, and that the men who have been returned in their stead can no more be compared to them than the Bushman can be ranked with a Briton. The country has failed in its gratitude.' The *Birmingham Daily Post* said that 'had any member of the last Parliament been asked the names of the six foremost men in that assembly, the name of Mr. John Bright would have been one of the six. He was foremost in oratory, and, better still, in singleness of purpose, straightforwardness of speech, and thorough conscientiousness and honesty.' The *Commonwealth* declared that 'never until the race of the Manchester men had we a party capable at once of arousing the nation and commanding the ear of the Senate. Such a party is much too valuable to be permitted to pass away. It will one day be wanted quite as much as at any former time.' The *Liverpool Northern Daily Times* said: 'The amount of labour Mr. Bright has gone through has been quite prodigious, and no wonder that brain and health have been impaired. We trust that this will only be for a time, and that he will rise up like a giant refreshed with sleep, and again gird himself to the combat with political and spiritual wickedness in high places.' 'There is no single man to whom Manchester owes more than to Mr. John Bright,' affirmed the *Leeds Mercury*, 'nor is there any man whose continued exclusion from the House we should more deeply regret. At the present moment, however, this unexpected relief from Parliamentary duties may be of great advantage to the health of one of the most illustrious champions of Free Trade, of one of our ablest orators, and of one of the most independent representatives who has ever had a seat in the House of Commons.' 'The exclusion of such a man as Mr. Bright from the House of Commons is a national loss,' said the *Edinburg Daily Review*. 'As we read over the dreary columns of aimless talk by men of no name, we shall miss the glowing eloquence of the man who never spoke but to forward the cause of truth and justice, and never ceased without having added something to the glory and fame of the assembly of which he was a member.' The *Liverpool Daily Post* said: 'In the great work Mr. Cobden sacrificed his fortune, and Mr. Bright undermined the most sacred part of his health. From the odium of this election our neighbours will never escape.' *The Edinburg Daily Express* observed that 'Mr. John Bright, the greatest living orator, the most conscientious of public men, twice returned triumphantly for Manchester, after wasting his health and almost his life in the people's cause, is placed at the foot of the poll.' Extracts of this nature could be multiplied, but those already quoted will sufficiently attest the general feeling of the press in regard to Mr. Bright's defeat.

have added to his name. His sorrow would be, not that Manchester had rejected him, but because it seemed for the moment to trample upon his principles.

The news of his defeat reached Mr. Bright at Florence, and from that city he wrote his farewell address to the electors of Manchester, dated March 31st, 1857. As this address is really a defence of Mr. Bright's political career up to the time of his rejection at Manchester, and is consequently a document of considerable historical value and importance, we append it in full:—

'Gentlemen,—I have received a telegraphic despatch informing me of the result of the election contest in which you have been engaged. That result has not greatly surprised me, and, so far as I am personally concerned—inasmuch as it liberates me from public life in a manner which involves on my part no shrinking from any duty—I cannot seriously regret it. I lament it on public grounds, because it tells the world that many amongst you have abandoned the opinions you professed to hold in the year 1847, and even so recently as in the year 1852.

'I believe that slander itself has not dared to charge me with having forsaken any of the principles, on the honest support of which I offered myself twice, and was twice accepted, as your representative. The charge against me has rather been that I have too warmly and too faithfully defended the political views that found so much favour with you at the two previous elections. If the change in the opinion of me has arisen from my course on the question of the war with Russia, I can only say that on a calm review of all the circumstances of the case—and during the past twelve months I have had ample time for such a review—I would not unsay or retract any one of the speeches I have spoken, or erase from the records of Parliament any one of the votes I have given upon it, if I could thereby reverse the decision to which you have come, or secure any other distinction which it is in the power of my countrymen to confer. I am free, and will remain free, from any share in the needless and guilty bloodshed of that melancholy chapter in the annals of my country.

'I cannot, however, forget that the leaders of the opposition in the recent contest have not been influenced by my conduct on this question. They were less successful, but not less bitter, in their hostility in 1852, and even in 1854, when my only public merit or demerit consisted in my labours in the cause of Free Trade. On each occasion, calling themselves Liberals, and calling their candidates Liberals also, they coalesced with the Conservatives, whilst now, doubtless, they have assailed Mr. Gibson and myself on the ground of a pretended coalition with the Conservatives in the House of Commons.

'I have esteemed it a high honour to be one of your representatives, and have given more of mental and physical labour to your service than was just to myself. I feel it scarcely less an honour to suffer in the cause of peace, and on behalf of what I believe to be the true interests of my country,—though I could have wished that the blow had come from other hands, at a time when I could have been present to meet face to face those who dealt it. In taking my leave of you and of public life, let me assure you that I can never forget the many—the innumerable kindnesses I have received from my friends amongst you. No one will rejoice more than I shall in all that brings you prosperity and honour; and I am not without a hope that when a calmer hour shall come, you will say of Mr. Gibson and of me, that as colleagues in your representation for ten years, we have not sacrificed our principles to gain popularity, or bartered our independence for the emoluments of office or the

favours of the great. I feel that we have stood for the rights and interests and freedom of the people, and that we have not tarnished the honour, or lessened the renown, of your eminent city.

'I am now, as I have hitherto been, very faithfully yours,

'JOHN BRIGHT.'

In May, 1857, when Mr. Bright was staying at Geneva, there was forwarded to him an address passed at a public meeting in Ardwick, which, while expressive of goodwill towards the right hon. gentleman, also alluded to his defeat and that of Mr. Cobden, and expressed a determination to agitate for reform, free trade, and retrenchment. In reply, Mr. Bright wrote: 'I am very glad to find that in your town the cause of reform, free trade, and retrenchment has so many warm friends, and that you have understood and approved the policy which Mr. Cobden, Mr. M. Gibson, and myself have supported in the House of Commons. On the question of free trade, little progress has been made for some years past. As to retrenchment, the word has become almost obsolete, and the military expenditure of the country is now nearly double the amount which the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel thought necessary in 1835, although we have no more territory to defend, and although a large army is no longer necessary to maintain tranquillity in Ireland. As to reform, whilst almost everybody professes to be in favour of it in some shape, the preparation of the particular bill to be brought forward next year is left in the hands of a Minister whose hostility to every proposition for reform since the year 1832 is notorious and undeniable. Whether on these three points, to which your resolutions refer, the country is in a satisfactory position, I must leave the friends of free trade, reform, and retrenchment to decide; and with regard to the promised reform, let me warn you not to look more to the question of the franchise than to the other arrangement of the measure. It would be easy to double the number of electors, and at the same time increase the aristocratic influence in Parliament. To give votes, without giving representation in some fair degree in proportion to those votes, is to cheat the people; to give a large number of votes without the security of the ballot, will subject the increased numbers of our countrymen to the degrading influence which wealth and power now exercise so unscrupulously upon the existing electoral body.'

If Mr. Bright cherished for a time the idea of not entering again upon public life, as would seem to be implied by a phrase

in his address to the electors of Manchester, it was to the honour of the town of Birmingham, as we now shall see, and to the great gain of Parliament and the country, that before the close of the year 1857 he was induced to abandon such intention.

CHAPTER XIV.

RETURNED FOR BIRMINGHAM.

Vacancy in the Representation of Birmingham.—Meetings to select a Candidate.—Mr. Bright nominated.—He issues his Address.—Observations on Indian Legislation and the Mutiny.—Election of Mr. Bright.—Speech in acknowledgment by Mr. Duncan Maclaren.—Letter from Mr. Bright.—Birmingham and the Reform Question.

THE prolonged exclusion of Mr. Bright from the House of Commons would have been viewed by all parties with extreme regret. Fortunately, as we have already intimated, his absence from the House was of very brief duration. Birmingham stepped forward, and in his enforced absence elected the great popular leader, thus atoning for the temporary ingratitude shown to Mr. Bright at Manchester.

By the death of Mr. G. F. Muntz, a vacancy had arisen in the representation of Birmingham; and on the 1st of August, 1857, a meeting of Liberals was held to select a candidate in the place of the deceased member. Mr. Hodgson, the ex-Mayor, presided. Mr. Ald. Lloyd, who proposed Mr. Bright, said he was of that courageous and manly disposition that peculiarly fitted him to become their representative. Mr. Bright was well versed in national and foreign affairs, and as there was no man in the House of Commons who had given so much attention to the affairs of England's great tributary, India, his counsel would be especially valuable at the present crisis. He placed the name of Mr. Bright before the meeting as that of a man whose election would do them honour. Mr. Ald. Manton seconded the proposition, but it was opposed by Mr. Councillor Stinton on the ground of Mr. Bright's peace principles. Some discussion ensued, and the meeting was adjourned until the evening. Mr. Ald. Hodgson presided also at the second meeting. Mr. J. S. Wright now nominated Mr. Bright, and his observations evoked much enthusiasm. He stated that Lord John Russell had paused in the middle of a great speech in the House of Commons, to utter his profound regret that Mr. John Bright was not in the House of Commons, so that his trenchant mind might enlighten them by its counsels. Upon Reform questions, Mr Bright was eminently fitted

to be their representative. He would extend the suffrage, and give a strong and an enlightened support to the principles of civil and religious liberty. Mr. Bright was also much wanted in the House at the existing crisis in Indian affairs; and if there was any man fully capable of contributing to the real glory of the British people, and who was desirous of developing the resources and energies of the Indian empire, and of raising the sleeping capacities of the Hindoo, that man was Mr. Bright. Mr. Ald. Manton seconded the proposition. The names of one or two other gentlemen were mentioned at the meeting as probable candidates, and it was finally arranged that the matter should be settled at a great public meeting to be called for the 4th of August.

On that evening the Town Hall was crowded with an audience numbering five or six thousand persons. Mr. W. Lucy occupied the chair. Mr. Bright was proposed for the vacant seat by Mr. George Edmonds, and seconded by Mr. Ald. Manton. Mr. T. A. Attwood proposed, and Mr. J. Goodman seconded, the nomination of Mr. Baron Webster as a candidate. Mr. M. A. Dalzell, while acknowledging the high character and abilities of Mr. Bright, said that the man who had for fourteen years fought the battle of democracy in Birmingham, and almost single-handed, was Mr. George Dawson. He had youth on his side, brilliant talents, and everything requisite to make a senator. Mr. Dawson, however, came forward and said that he was unable to stand as a candidate. He expressed his conviction that Mr. Bright was the only man on whom there was any chance of their agreeing. Although he differed from Mr. Bright on the subject of the Russian war, and on some other questions, these differences would not incline him to prefer a mere respectable Birmingham man, untried in politics, and who had done little service, to a man who was foremost in the House of Commons, and who was one of the most straightforward and honest of Englishmen. This generous tribute to Mr. Bright, coming from one who had himself been asked to come forward as a candidate, elicited loud applause. Mr. Dawson added that he had a peculiar reason for liking Mr. Bright—he believed him to be a right honest and able enemy of Lord Palmerston. He considered that Lord Palmerston's rule in this country was disastrous and disgraceful, and there was not a man in England who could meet him like John Bright.

When the show of hands was taken, scarcely a hundred hands were held up for Mr. Webster, while six thousand persons

held up their hands for Mr. Bright, who thus became the Liberal candidate. The committee for securing his election issued an address describing the services and principles of 'the people's candidate.' A Mr. M'Geachy came forward in the Conservative interest, but his candidature, like that of Mr. Webster, was not regarded as serious.

Mr. Bright consented to come forward, and at once issued his address. At that time the terrible Indian Mutiny was the all-absorbing question occupying public attention, and on this subject Mr. Bright said: 'Whilst I deplore this terrible event, along with the rest of my countrymen, I am perhaps less surprised at it than most of them are. For twelve years I have given great attention to the subject of India. I have twice brought it before Parliament, once in moving for a select committee, and once in moving for a royal commission of inquiry; and I took an active part in the debates on the bill recently passed to continue the powers of the East India Company, and attended public meetings in several of our large cities with a view to excite public interest in the great question of the government of India. The success of the insurrection would involve anarchy in India, unless some great man, emerging from the chaos, should build up a new empire, based on and defended by military power. I am not prepared to defend the steps by which England has obtained dominion in the East; but looking to the interests of India and of England, I cannot oppose such measures as may be deemed necessary to suppress the existing disorder. To restore order to India is a mercy to India; but heavy will be the guilt of our countrymen should we neglect hereafter any measure which would contribute to the welfare of its hundred millions of population. I hope the acts of the Government will be free from the vindictive and sanguinary spirit which is shown in many of the letters which appear in the newspapers; and that when the present crisis is over, all that exists of statesmanship in England will combine to work what good is possible out of so much evil.' But while Mr. Bright thus supported the Government in suppressing the Mutiny, he subsequently expressed his deep indignation at the severities and cruelties practised by the British troops and their commanders on the natives of India.

The nomination for Birmingham was held in the Town Hall on the 10th of August. In consequence of the state of his health, Mr. Bright was unable to be present at the proceedings. The Mayor, Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Ratcliff, presided. Ald. Lloyd nominated Mr. Bright, and Mr. George Edmonds se-

conded the nomination. The latter gentleman prophesied that that day's meeting would be hereafter referred to as forming an epoch in the Parliamentary history of the Midland metropolis. The other candidates having withdrawn, Mr. Bright was declared duly elected.

Mr. Duncan Maclaren, Mr. Bright's brother-in-law, now stepped forward to thank the electors for the great honour they had conferred upon his distinguished relative. Mr. Bright's illness, he said, was the result of an overwrought brain, and his medical advisers had laid upon him strict injunctions not only to abstain from speaking, but even to abstain from appearing at public meetings, where exciting circumstances might be the means of bringing back that disease which a merciful Providence had now removed. He had been strongly pressed to give his brain two years' repose. Eighteen months of that abstinence from public life had already elapsed, and the two years would have expired ere Mr. Bright was called on to take his seat in Parliament. In Mr. Bright's address, continued Mr. Maclaren, they had the spontaneous expression of his opinions, for he was not the man to trim his sails to catch the passing breeze. He did not come forward with any apology, with any retraction, with any expression of regret, with any promise of amendment; but he said that, as he had been an advocate of his country's interests, a defender of the rights of the working classes, the supporter of good legislation of every kind, so would he continue to be, and maintain those views which he believed to be right, whether they were in unison with or against popular opinion. The speaker went on to say that the people of Birmingham had come forward spontaneously, and held out the right hand of fellowship to Mr. Bright at a time when he had been struck down, and after he had given the best years of his life to the public service. The call, therefore, was one to which he felt bound to respond, and he had frankly done so. As to the Reform question, if Birmingham worked for Reform as it did twenty-five years before, they might depend upon it that the present election would not only be important to them as a constituency, and to Mr. Bright as an individual, but also to the best interests of the nation. Mr. George Dawson, who also spoke, said that when the proud Austrian Government heard that John Bright was returned for Birmingham, they would know and feel that it was in vain to league themselves with any emperors to ask of the English nation to put foreign exiles into their power.

Upon the news of his election being telegraphed to him, Mr.

Bright wrote a letter to his new constituents, expressing a hope of soon being able to meet them in person. In this hope, however, he was for some time further disappointed. Parliament was called together earlier than usual in the following December; but feeling unable to begin his own Parliamentary duties before Christmas, Mr. Bright wrote to that effect to Mr. Alderman Lloyd, the chairman of the Liberal Election Committee. No real business was expected to be transacted before February, and therefore he trusted that the interests of his constituents would not suffer from his temporary absence from the House. Mr. Bright added: 'It is because I wished to abstain as much as possible from public affairs, that I have not troubled my constituents with any views I may entertain on the great subjects which have been so much discussed during the past three months. On the question of India, indeed, I feel that it is almost rashness to offer a decided opinion; and I know not whether we ought to regard with admiration or with pity many of those who have written and spoken so confidently upon it since the occurrence of the insurrection. Judging from the writings of the newspapers and from the speeches of public men, I fear the country is by no means sufficiently aware of the crisis which has arisen, whether we regard the difficulty of restoring order in India, or the obstacles which oppose themselves to the future government of that country. Five years ago, when the India Bill was about to come under discussion, I thought I knew something of India, and felt that I could give advice on the subject. But the scene has totally changed, and that which was easy to do in fair weather, may be impossible, or of little avail, when the storm rages. I presume, however, that the days of the Leadenhall Street rulers of India are numbered. Without character and without power, it requires but a vote of Parliament to give legal effect to that which, I believe, the public opinion of England has already decreed. If the coming session shall establish the government of India on a secure and wise basis, so far as that is possible in the unnatural position in which we stand to that country, I shall feel that Parliament has not laboured in vain; and if the threatened postponement of a Reform Bill be a disappointment to me and many others, I shall endeavour to console myself with the hope that the improvement of our representation will, hereafter, be entrusted to more friendly hands than those which now administer the affairs of the country.'

Birmingham, however, began to stir in the question of Reform, as it had done upon the great bill of 1832, and on the

2nd of February, 1858, a large and influential meeting was held upon the subject, the Mayor presiding. Mr. Bright, who was unable to be present, wrote to the promoters of the meeting, and remarked: 'If your great town, with its great constituency, is only to send two men to Parliament, whilst an equal population and property in some other part of the kingdom is to send twenty men to Parliament, then I say that the franchise is of little avail.' The writer maintained that 'any Reform Bill which is worth a moment's thought or smallest effort to carry it, must at least double—and it ought to do more than double—the representation of the metropolitan boroughs and the great cities of the United Kingdom.' On the question of the Ballot, he added: 'It is worthy of remark that no meeting has been held for many years in favour of Reform at which the Ballot has not been strongly insisted on. If Reform is to be granted to gratify and content reformers, if their judgment and unanimity are sufficient to justify or to force its concession, then surely the Ballot cannot be denied to us. I feel certain it will not long be refused.'

Birmingham had now acquired a representative who reflected lustre upon the borough—a representative whose name was with thousands a synonym for freedom, and justice, and progress. His claims upon the gratitude and admiration of the masses of his countrymen were known and felt; and every one who valued the independent character and the influence and usefulness of the House of Commons, applauded the step by which the great Midland town restored Mr. Bright to his just place in that assembly.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. BRIGHT ON INDIA.

England and India.—Evils of British Rule.—Lord Palmerston and the French Emperor.—The Conspiracy to Murder Bill.—Defeat and Resignation of the Ministry.—India Legislation in 1853.—Mr. Bright on Sir C. Wood's Bill.—Indian Questions in 1858–9.—Results of our Government in the East.—Able Survey by Mr. Bright.—His proposals for the future Government of India.—Lord Canning's Proclamation.—Debate on Lord Ellenborough's Despatch.—The Indian Budget of 1859.—Another powerful appeal by Mr. Bright.—Sir A. Burnes and the Afghan War of 1837–8.—Sir Arthur Cotton at Manchester.—Mr. Bright's Remedies for Indian Famines.

THE affairs of India formed the most prominent topic of discussion in the session of 1858, as did the Reform question in the session ensuing. On both these great questions Mr. Bright delivered some of his finest and most comprehensive speeches. The deep interest which the right hon. gentlemen has always taken in India would be sufficient to refute the objection sometimes advanced by his opponents, that his genius and sympathies are alike insular and contracted. Twenty-five years ago England was exceedingly backward in her government of India. The East India Company did pretty well what seemed best in its own eyes; and while it had lost its commercial monopoly in the Eastern seas, it still wielded its great administrative power over the rulers and the people of India. Annexation had progressed apace; the Company's financial policy, as one critic has pointed out, was open to severe animadversion—it encouraged the cultivation of injurious drugs for a foreign market in order to maintain its income; it discountenanced the growth of cotton—an article which would have yielded an abundant crop, and for which there was a constant demand; internal improvements in the dependencies were utterly neglected; and, in short, our whole administration in India was such as to bring great discredit upon the East India Company. The continuance of these evils naturally reflected some portion of this discredit upon the Home Government. At length the time came for action, and in 1858 Imperial legislation was initiated.

Before tracing the course of this legislation, however, we

must glance for a moment at a measure which unexpectedly led to the downfall of the Palmerston Government. After the abortive attempt of Felice Orsini and his friends to assassinate the Emperor Napoleon III., a strong feeling arose in certain influential French circles that the English law afforded an improper degree of shelter and countenance to foreign refugees and conspirators. This feeling found vent in the French newspapers, but more especially in several congratulatory addresses presented to the Emperor after his escape by certain colonels in the French army, which addresses received additional importance by being published in the official columns of the *Moniteur*. The accusations made against England by M. de Morny in the Legislative Chamber of France, and by M. de Persigny, the French Ambassador in London, led to a strong revulsion of feeling against the Emperor and his Ministers in this country. The idea rapidly gained ground that England was being dictated to by a foreign Power. On the 8th of February, 1858, Lord Palmerston introduced his 'Conspiracy to Murder Bill,' but denied that in doing so he was acting under pressure. Indeed, with regard to the addresses complained of, he had, he said, made representations to France, and was commissioned on the part of the Emperor to state that he regretted their publication. His lordship then briefly stated the object of his bill, which proposed to make conspiracy to murder a felony, punishable with penal servitude, and to apply it to all persons with respect to conspiracies to murder wherever intended. An amendment moved by Mr. Kinglake, with the object of deferring legislation, was subsequently withdrawn, and leave was given to bring in the bill. Mr. Bright was amongst those who opposed this measure, and by the time the bill came on for second reading it had become evident that they were backed up by a large public opinion out of doors. The conviction was strengthened that the Ministers of the Queen were merely acting at the instigation of the French Government. Mr. Milner Gibson moved a series of amendments expressive of sympathy with the French Emperor, and the readiness of the House to amend acknowledged legal defects at once, but also expressing surprise that the Government had not answered the despatch of Count Walewski, before calling on the House to amend the law of conspiracy. Mr. Gibson's speech was loudly cheered. He quoted the *Times* to the effect that 'when Lord Palmerston has made up his mind to court the good will of a foreign Power, no sacrifice of principle or of interest is too great for him. From first to last his character has been the want of a firm and

lofty adherence to the known interests of England.' Mr. Bright seconded his friend's motion, but made no speech on the occasion. Vigorous speeches were delivered by Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Gladstone. The last-named observed that the times were grave for liberty, and that 'a measure passed by this House of Commons—the chief hope of freedom —which attempts to establish a moral complicity between us and those who seek safety in repressive measures, will be a blow and a discouragement to that sacred cause in every country in the world.' Lord Palmerston replied, but Mr. Gibson's amendment was carried against Ministers by 234 to 215, or a majority of 19. The Premier resigned in consequence of this vote; and the Earl of Derby, who was summoned by Her Majesty, came into power as the head of a new Conservative Government.

Indian legislation, which had been interrupted by the Ministerial crisis, was resumed by the new Government. In order, however, to understand the position of the East India Company, and the government of India generally, we must first go back to the session of 1853, when Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control in Lord Aberdeen's Ministry, introduced on behalf of the Government a measure for the better government of India. By this bill it was proposed that for the future the relations between the Court of Directors and the Board of Control should remain unchanged, but that the constitution of the former should be altered, and its patronage curtailed. The members of the Court, twenty-four in number, were to be reduced to eighteen, of whom twelve were to be elected as before, and six nominated by the Crown from Indian servants who had been ten years in the service of the Crown or the Company. Every second year one-third of the number were to go out, but they were to be re-eligible. It was proposed to abolish nominations by favour, and to separate the Governorship of Bengal from the office of Governor-General. The number of the Legislative Council was to be increased to twelve, and its greater efficiency provided for. The superior courts were to be improved, and minor courts were to be instituted in each of the towns of the Presidencies. It was also proposed to raise the character, acquirements, and salaries of the native judges.

On the introduction of this bill Mr. Bright delivered a speech which attested his mastery of the whole subject. In fact, he and Sir Charles Wood occupied the entire evening. Sir Charles spoke for five hours,—viz., from five to ten o'clock,—and Mr. Bright for two hours, from ten to twelve o'clock.

Mr. Bright objected to the scheme entirely, on the ground of the maintenance of the double government, which was a mockery and a delusion; and he was convinced that it would not be approved by the whole Cabinet. It was not possible, he said, amidst cheers and laughter, that thirteen sensible gentlemen, with any pretensions to form a Cabinet, would agree to a measure of that nature. The speaker then examined the various provisions of the measure, showing their inaccuracy, and fortifying his statements as to the condition of India by statistics and information compiled by Mr. Kaye and others on the spot. Coming to the real gist of the measure, he said: 'The right hon. gentleman is afraid of bringing the government of India under the authority of the Crown. What, I should like to know, would have been done if India had been conquered by the troops of the Crown? We should then never have sent some thirty men into a by-street of London to distribute patronage and govern a great country. The government of India would then have been made a department of the Government, with a Council and a Minister of State. But it appears that the old system of hocus-pocus is still to be carried on. This is no question of Manchester against Essex—of town against country—of Church against Nonconformity. It is a question in which we all have an interest, and in which our children may be more deeply interested than we are ourselves. Should anything go wrong with the finances, we must bear the burden; or should the people of India by our treatment be goaded into insurrection, we must reconquer the country, or be ignominiously driven out of it.'

After this prophetic warning, Mr. Bright implored the House so to act at the existing juncture, that it might be said hereafter, 'that whatever crimes England originally committed in conquering India, she at least made the best of her position by governing the country as wisely as possible, and left the records and traces of a humane and liberal sway.' With this passage he concluded his address:—

'I recollect having heard the noble lord the member for Tiverton (Viscount Palmerston) deliver in this House one of the best speeches I ever listened to. On that occasion the noble lord gloried in the proud name of England, and, pointing to the security with which an Englishman might travel abroad, he triumphed in the idea that his countrymen might exclaim, in the spirit of the ancient Roman, *Civis Romanus sum.* Let us not resemble the Romans merely in our national privileges and personal security. The Romans were great conquerors, but where they conquered, they governed wisely. The nations they conquered were impressed so indelibly with the intellectual character of their masters, that, after fourteen centuries of decadence, the traces of civilization are still distinguishable. Why should not we act a similar part in India?

There never was a more docile people, never a a more tractable nation. The opportunity is present, and the power is not wanting. Let us abandon the policy of aggression, and confine ourselves to a territory ten times the size of France, with a population four times as numerous as that of the United Kingdom. Surely that is enough to satisfy the most gluttonous appetite for glory and supremacy. Educate the people of India, govern them wisely, and gradually the distinctions of caste will disappear and they will look upon us rather as benefactors than as conquerors. And if we desire to see Christianity, in some form, professed in that country, we shall sooner attain our object by setting the example of a high-toned Christian morality, than by any other means we can employ.'

Leave was eventually given to bring in the bill, but when it came on for second reading, Lord Stanley moved a resolution against it. Mr. Lowe, Mr. Macaulay, Mr. Cobden, and Sir James Graham delivered eloquent speeches during the debate, and Mr. Bright again addressed the House. He dwelt on the miseries of the population in India, and observed that the town of Manchester alone had for years spent more in its own improvements than had been spent in India by a Government drawing annually £29,000,000 of taxes, and ruling more than 100,000,000 of people. He again insisted upon the popularity which a Government direct from the Crown would enjoy in India. In concluding, he urged with regard to our Indian Empire that if it was said it could be kept only by force and terror, after having been conquered by force—if it was to be governed by a government in a mask—if the people and Parliament of England were to be shut out from all consideration with regard to it—why then the glory of that House would have departed, and we should have proved ourselves a nation which, having conquered a country, had maintained merely the conquest of arms, while we had not the intellect, the benevolence, or the ability to govern it as it deserved.

The second reading was carried by a large majority, but lengthy discussions ensued in Committee. Improvements in the bill, some of which were due to Mr. Bright, were effected; and in the House of Lords the measure was subjected to still further revision; but eventually it passed, and became law.

We now come to the legislative measures of 1858 and 1859. The terrible Indian Mutiny having been suppressed, a bill was brought forward early in the former session for the purpose of placing the possessions of the East India Company under the immediate authority of the Crown. The Government, however, being defeated, as already shown, on the Conspiracy Bill, the measure was withdrawn. The question, nevertheless, was taken up by Lord Derby's Ministry, and India Bill No. 2 was produced on the 26th of March. Mr. Disraeli announced that,

amongst other features of the bill, it provided that five members in the proposed council of eighteen should be elected by the constituencies of the following cities,—London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast. Mr. Bright warned the Goverment to reconsider the measure, and Lord J. Russell said that the hon. member's opinion of the delusive character of its provisions had much foundation, and was largely shared. The noble lord proposed that the bill should be withdrawn, and that resolutions should be passed in a Committee of the whole House, the acceptance of which would be useful in guiding the policy of the Government. Mr. Disraeli accepted the suggestion, and No. 2 Bill disappeared. On the 24th of June it was succeeded by Bill No. 3. The leading principles of the measure were that the government of India should be transferred to the Crown, that the administration of Indian affairs should be by a responsible Minister, and that this Minister should be assisted by Council.

Lord Stanley moved the second reading, and the chief feature in the debate which ensued was a very able and comprehensive speech by Mr. Bright, in which he explained fully his views as to the best mode of governing our Eastern dependencies. He should not oppose the second reading, he said, though there were clauses in the bill of which he disapproved. As to the government of India, what were the changes required? What was the condition of the people? The great body of them were in a state of impoverishment, dejection, and suffering. Industry was neglected, and perjury and its attendant evils prevailed in our courts of justice. With regard to public works, in a single English county there were more roads than were to be found in the whole of India; and the city of Manchester, in supplying its inhabitants with water, had spent a larger sum than the East India Company had spent in fourteen years in public works of every kind throughout their vast dominions. There could not be a better test, in the long run, of good government than the state of the finances; and the normal condition of the government of India was one of financial deficiency and bankruptcy. He held, therefore, that the government of India was a bad government; and he traced its vices to its extravagance in the carrying on of unjust wars, and its wholesale annexations. 'I have come to the conclusion,' continued Mr. Bright, 'which many hon. members probably share with me, that the edifice we have reared in India is too vast. There are few men now, and least of all those connected with the East India Company, who, looking back to the policy

that has been pursued, will not be willing to admit that it has not been judicious but hazardous, that territories have been annexed that had better have been left independent, and that wars have been undertaken which were as needless as they were altogether unjustifiable. The immense empire that has been conquered is too vast for management, its base is in decay, and during the last twelve months it has appeared to be tottering to its fall. Who or what is the instrument—the Cabinet, the Government, or the person—by whom this evil policy is carried on?'

Mr. Bright went on to say that the power of the Governor-General was too great; and he should, if he could, propose as an indispensable condition that this office, the duties of which were far greater than any human being was competent to fulfil, should be abolished. If asked to suggest a substitute, he thought we should have presidencies in India, and not an empire. If he were Minister, and could get the House to agree with him, he would have five presidencies in India, perfectly equal, administered from Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Agra, and Lahore. Among these governments there would be a generous rivalry for good, instead of utter stagnation; evil ambition would be checked; there would be no Governor so great that he could not be controlled; and if we were at last driven from India, we should leave it in the form of so many compact states, able to support their own government, and not a prey to anarchy and discord. When this bill passed, the hon. member further said, he would proclaim a general amnesty, put an end to all mischievous inquiries into titles to landed estates, and hold sacred the right of adoption, telling the people of India that we believed that the Christian religion was true, and the best for mankind; but that that religion taught us to respect the rights of conscience, and that the Parliament and the Queen of England had resolved that no wrong should be done to the millions who professed creeds which they believed to be true; and he would establish a Court of Appeal in India, composed of judges of high character, for the settlement of disputes between the Government and its subjects. From Mr. Bright's peroration we give the following extracts:—

'There are positions and times in the history of every country, as in the lives of individuals, when courage and action are absolute salvation; and now the Crown of England, acting by the advice of the responsible Ministers, must, in my opinion, have recourse to a great and unusual measure in order to allay the anxieties which prevail throughout the whole of India. The people of India do not like us, but they scarcely know where to turn if we left them. They are sheep literally without a shepherd. They are people whom you

have subdued, and who have the highest and strongest claims upon you—claims which you cannot forget—claims which, if you do not act upon, you may rely upon it that, if there be a judgment for nations—as I believe there is—as for individuals, our children in no distant generation must pay the penalty which we have purchased by neglecting our duty to the population of India. . . I believe that upon this question depends very much, for good or for evil, the future of this country of which we are citizens, and which we all regard and love so much. You have had enough of military reputation on Eastern fields; you have gathered large harvests of that commodity, be it valuable or be it worthless. I invite you to something better, and higher, and holier than that; I invite you to a glory not "fanned by conquest's crimson wing," but based upon the solid and lasting benefits which I believe the Parliament of England can, if it will, confer upon the countless populations of India.'

This remarkable speech attracted great attention, and even those who most widely differed from it admired its power and the breadth by which it was characterized. The bill was read a second time. In Committee fresh clauses were added, amongst them being one carried by Mr. Gladstone, limiting the employment of East Indian troops to our Indian possessions. The bill ultimately passed both Houses, and became law.

In the month of May another important debate in connection with India arose. An incomplete copy of a proclamation by Lord Canning, the Governor-General, having been published, threatening confiscation to the insurgent landowners of Oude, Lord Ellenborough, the Minister for India, sent a despatch severely censuring this proclamation. This despatch became public, and led to his lordship's resignation, and very nearly to the defeat of the Government. A vote of censure was moved in both Houses of Parliament, but not carried, Lord Ellenborough simplifying the crisis for the Government by voluntarily resigning office. In the Lords, however, out of a House composed of 325 members (a very large number), the motion was only defeated by a majority of nine. Mr. Cardwell brought on the matter in the Commons, but after a debate extending over several nights, the motion was withdrawn, in consequence of representations made to the mover to the effect that Lord Canning had given up his policy of confiscation. The Ministerial crisis, to which some had looked forward, was thus averted.

Mr. Bright spoke during the debate, and condemned the policy of the proclamation. His speech was exceedingly happy, alike from its humour, its argumentative power, and its eloquence. After declaring that there was no concert between himself and the Secretary to the India Board as to the proclamation, he said that the Solicitor-General had furnished a

complete and satisfactory answer to all the charges against the Government. If the resolution was carried, the people of Oude would regard the vote as an approval of the proclamation. All admitted that the people of Oude were not mutineers, yet the proclamation would produce, not a political, but a social revolution in that country. The extinction of the proprietary right in the soil would apply to more than forty thousand large landowners. He believed that the proclamation sanctioned this wholesale confiscation, and that the resolution sanctioned the proclamation. It would be so read in India, and it would be one of the most unfortunate declarations that ever went from this country to India. Mr. Bright traced our pecuniary dealings with Oude, which he said ought to make the House pause before it filled up the cup of injury which has been presented to the people of that country. He also reviewed the despatch, and the effects it might produce upon the feelings of Lord Canning. If the question was between hurting the feelings of Lord Canning and sanctioning this proclamation, he should have no hesitation as to his choice. Upon a probable change of the Government as the result of Mr. Cardwell's motion, the speaker amusingly remarked, 'We are told, and the whole country has been in a state of expectation and wonder upon it, that two eminent statesmen have actually dined together; and I am very glad to hear that men engaged in the strife of politics can dine together without personal hostility. I say nothing of the viands that were eaten. I say nothing of the beverage that was in the "loving cup" that went round. One of our oldest and greatest poets has told us that

"Nepenthe is a drink of soverayne grace."

He says that it was devised by the gods to subdue contention and subject the passions; but that it was given only to the aged and the wise, who were prepared by it to take their places with ancient heroes in a higher sphere. But that could not have been the contents of the "loving cup" in this instance, for these aged statesmen are still determined to cling to this world, and to mix, as heretofore, with all the vigour and fire of youth in the turmoil and contention of public life. But does the fact of this dinner point to reconciliation and to a firm and liberal administration? I believe that any such Government would be the worst of all coalitions. I believe that it would be built upon insincerity, and I suspect it would be of no advantage to the country. Therefore I am not anxious to see such a Government attempted.'

With these impassioned sentences the member for Birmingham concluded: 'I am willing to avow that I am in favour of justice and conciliation—of the law of justice and of kindness. Justice and mercy are the supreme attributes of the perfection which we call Deity, but all men everywhere comprehend them; there is no speech nor language in which their voice is not heard, and they cannot be vainly exercised with regard to the docile and intelligent millions of India. You have had the choice. You have tried the sword. It has broken; it now rests broken in your grasp; and you stand humbled and rebuked. You stand humbled and rebuked before the eyes of civilized Europe. You may have another chance. You may, by possibility, have another opportunity of governing India. If you have, I beseech you to make the best use of it. Do not let us pursue such a policy as many men in India, and some in England, have advocated, but which hereafter you will have to regret, which can end only, as I believe, in something approaching to the ruin of this country, and which must, if it be persisted in, involve our name and nation in everlasting disgrace.'

In August, 1859, Sir Charles Wood brought in the Indian Budget. After dealing fully with the questions of income and expenditure, the Indian Secretary stated that when all was done that we could hope to do, there must still be for a year or two a considerable deficiency in our Indian finances, and five or six millions sterling would have to be provided by Parliament. It was the intention of the Government to select a person versed in finance to be sent to India, to take the revenue and financial department under his charge. Sir C. Wood maintained that there had been a progressive improvement in the revenues of India, while of the future of the country he by no means despaired; and he concluded by moving a resolution enabling the Government to raise in the United Kingdom for the service of the government of India £5,000,000 to meet the demands of the year.

The Loan Bill passed through both Houses, but before the formal resolutions were taken in the Commons, Mr. Bright, in earnest and solemn terms, once more besought the House to look its enormous responsibilities in connection with India in the face. He confessed that he took a gloomy view of the destinies of that country. To him the danger seemed every year to increase in magnitude, and having paid some attention to the subject, he desired to take his share in confronting the evil. On the question of annexation, he observed, 'No policy can be

more lunatic than the policy of annexation we have pursued of late years in India, and the calamity we are now meeting is the natural and inevitable consequence of the folly we have committed. It is not easy for great generals and statesmen who have been made earls and marquises, and had bronze statues put up in their honour in our public squares—it is not easy for the statesmen who have done all this to turn round and reverse it all; they have not the moral courage to do it; it might be an act of peril; it might appear a descent from the summit of empire, and be wrongly construed throughout the world. But as a question of finance and good government, we should, a few years hence, admit that it was a sound policy.' Replying to Sir Charles Wood's statement that everything was satisfactory in 1853, Mr. Bright said that in that year it did happen that the deficit was £143,000 only. But it gave a better idea of the case to note that in the three years preceding the Mutiny, the deficit was £2,823,000. It must be a bad government that did not defray its expenses out of the taxes; yet in India millions were levied on the sale and transit of opium, by a process which was not taxation. That was in danger of being impaired or cut off altogether. Next year the debt would be £100,000,000. That the money could be borrowed at all, even at a high rate of interest, only arose from the fact that England contrived to scramble through her difficulties, and keep good faith. With regard to an Imperial guarantee, he did not oppose it from sympathy with English taxpayers, but because if we let 'the service of India' put its hand into the pockets of the English people it was impossible to foresee to what lengths of unimagined extravagance it would go. The military expenditure now absorbed the net revenue, and not a farthing was left to pay the public creditor. He predicted that either the Government of India must come to an end, or England must become tributary to India. Mr. Bright declared that the Civil Service was overpaid; that it did not deserve the praises heaped upon it; and he proposed that its income should be reduced one-half. He also argued against maintaining an European or native army larger than was absolutely required. The Mutiny had been suppressed by 45,000 men; the people of Oude had been disarmed; and there was now no power in India for armed resistance except the native army, which had been built up of late to a greater extent than ever. He would not be ruled by the authority of military men as to the force which should be maintained, and he showed that if a large European force were kept, the supremacy of the con-

quering race would be displayed in an offensive manner. But when the English were weak in India, the natives were treated with respect. A Government with a vast army must always be in a difficulty. There was a constant strain as to how it was to be paid. Moreover, 'a large army will render it impossible for you to hold this country, for you will have a constantly increasing debt, and anarchy must inevitably overwhelm you in the end. A small army, a moderate, conciliatory, and just Government, with the finances in a prosperous condition, and I know not but for generations and centuries this country may possess a share, and a large share, in the government of those vast territories which it has conquered.'

Mr. Bright went on to affirm that there was no government in India, and no independent English opinion; while the Civil Service was privileged, arrogant, and tyrannous. The Governor-General was the creature of the services, and procrastination was the very nature of the Government. Lord Stanley had condemned the annexation of Dhar, but no notice had been taken of his letter. Sir Charles Trevelyan had sought to introduce beneficial changes at Madras, but he had raised a hornets' nest about him. After drawing a telling and sarcastic picture of the helpless position of a Governor-General, hampered by circumstances and conditions, Mr. Bright came to his own remedy for India, viz., the decentralization of the Government, alleging Ceylon as an example, and recommending electoral councils for Bombay and Madras. He was convinced that not a single step would be made towards the improvement of India, unless we changed our whole system of government, and gave to each Presidency a government with more independent powers than were now possessed by them. What would be thought if the whole of Europe was under one Governor, who knew only the language of the Feejee Islands, and if his subordinates were like himself, only more intelligent than the inhabitants of the Feejee Islands are supposed to be? Yet we set a Governor over 150,000,000 of human beings, in a climate where the European could not do the work he has to do so well as here; and we seemed to think that the atmosphere would be always calm and the sea always smooth 'And so the government of India goes on; there are promises without number of beneficial changes, but we never hear that India is much better or worse than before.' Mr. Bright, in conclusion, presented this powerful description of our relations towards India:—

'Look at your responsibilities India is ruled by Englishmen, but remember that in that unfortunate country you have destroyed every form of government but your own; that you have cast the thrones of the natives to the ground. Princely families, once the rulers of India, are now either houseless wanderers in the land they once called their own, or are pensioners on the bounty of those strangers by whom their fortunes have been overthrown. They who were noble and gentle for ages are now merged in the common mass of the people. All over those vast regions there are countless millions, helpless and defenceless, deprived of their natural leaders and their ancient chiefs, looking with only some small ray of hope to that omnipresent and irresistible Power by which they have been subjected. I appeal to you on behalf of that people. I have besought your mercy and your justice for many a year past; and if I speak to you earnestly now, it is because the object for which I plead is dear to my heart. Is it not possible to touch a chord in the hearts of Englishmen, to raise them to a sense of the miseries inflicted on that unhappy country by the crimes and the blunders of our rulers here? If you have steeled your hearts against the natives, if nothing can stir you to sympathy with their miseries, at least have pity upon your own countrymen. Rely upon it the state of things which now exists in India must, before long, become most serious. I hope that you will not show to the world that, although your fathers conquered the country, you have not the ability to govern it. You had better disencumber yourselves of the fatal gift of empire than that the present generation should be punished for the sins of the past. I speak in condemnatory language, because I believe it to be deserved. I hope that no future historian will have to say that the arms of England in India were irresistible, and that an ancient empire fell before their victorious progress,—yet that finally India was avenged, because the power of her conqueror was broken by the intolerable burdens and evils which she cast upon her victim, and that this wrong was accomplished by a waste of human life and a waste of wealth which England, with all her power, was unable to bear.'

Mr. Bright's views upon the government of India were of course not popular amongst those persons who supported to the full English interests in India. There is a very large class of individuals in this country who view India merely as a field for providing light and remunerative employment for the youth of our aristocracy, and others. Any suggestion therefore for the curtailment of the Indian services, and the reduction of our vast expenditure in the East, was regarded by this numerous body of persons with great disfavour. Then, too, there were many politicians and statesmen who honestly differed from Mr. Bright upon the principles on which India ought to be governed. Yet there never was an unofficial orator who delivered such speeches as those of Mr. Bright on this question, either as regards their wide range, their complete grasp of the subject, or the marked character of their eloquence.

On several occasions subsequent to those already dealt with, Mr. Bright has touched upon Indian affairs. In the session of 1861 Mr. Dunlop brought forward a resolution to inquire into the discrepancies between certain sets of documents relating to the Afghan War of 1837-8. Some passages in the despatches of

Sir Alexander Burnes had been mutilated, in order to make it appear that he advised a policy which he really condemned. Mr. Dunlop accordingly moved for a committee to inquire into the alleged mutilation of despatches presented to the House. He was answered by Lord Palmerston, but Mr. Bright afterwards took up the matter in a very spirited speech. He complained that the noble lord had heaped insult upon the memory of a man who died in the execution of what he believed to be his public duty. Having reviewed the circumstances of the case as affecting Sir A. Burnes, Mr. Bright said, 'Nothing can sink Parliament to a lower state of degradation and baseness than that it should permit Ministers of the Crown to lay upon the table, upon questions involving the sacrifice of £20,000,000 of money, and 20,000 lives, documents which are not true—which slander our public servants, and which slander them most basely when they are dead and are not here to answer.' Although the motion was negatived by a large majority, the memory of Sir Alexander Burnes was vindicated.

In a speech delivered at Manchester on the 11th of December, 1877, Mr. Bright again returned to the important question of the government of India. The occasion was the reception of Sir Arthur Cotton, by the members of the Indian Association in Manchester, who were desirous of hearing the opinions which Sir Arthur entertained as to the means of preventing famine in India for the future. After passing briefly in review our mode of governing India, Mr. Bright observed that the country was at that moment in a state of great and abject poverty. England for the most part took no notice of India and her famines until there came the calamity of the Mutiny, when England suffered greatly, and passed through a period of humiliation. When the Mutiny took place, the East India Company fell, yet that old institution had been praised up to its very fall. Referring next to the past famines, and the one now imminent, Mr. Bright asked, What is the remedy? Sir Charles Trevelyan had said he was satisfied that with a thorough system of irrigation, famines would be impossible in India. If canals for navigation or irrigation (continued Mr. Bright) were made upon some grand scheme, determined by competent and eminent engineers, you would find the produce of nearly all the districts of India, all those not hitherto irrigated, would probably be doubled. But as regards such matters our policy was generally to wait until the horse was stolen before locking the stable door. As to the government of India, he did not believe that half a dozen gentlemen in Calcutta were capable

of administering the government of some two hundred millions of people. But, unfortunately, they were civilians, engineers, military men, everybody—who were in favour of, and had an interest in, patronage, promotion, salaries, and ultimately pensions. There was also no public opinion to fight in favour of economy. Even the press in India which touched the Government was, as a rule, in favour of annexation of more territory, more places, more salaries, and ultimately more pensions. A government such as that which existed had some fatal defect which at no distant time must bring disaster and humiliation to the Government and the people on whose behalf it ruled. Mr. Bright again advocated the creation of five or six great independent presidencies as the best solution of the difficulty, especially as the day must come, from some cause or other, when the power of England would be withdrawn from India. Nearly two years after the delivery of this speech, Mr. Bright, in addressing his constituents at Birmingham, chiefly upon the Eastern policy of the Government, observed that we were in the habit of hearing constantly that Russia was a despotic country, and the Czar the greatest of despots. 'But our Indian Empire contains a population nearly three times as great as that of the Russian Empire, and it is an Empire also that is governed by a despotism—that is, a government which has no representative institutions, and in which a few men with some one at the top of them—an Emperor in Russia, in India a Governor-General representing the Queen of England—administer the whole government of the Empire; it does not follow that because it is a despotism it should be unjust or cruel.' But he proceeded to ridicule the manner of our government in India, and remarked that the taxation was oppressive to such a degree that all the authorities in India admitted you could not turn the screw any more. India was pretty nearly bankrupt, and there was generally a deficit. As to our holding India, we held it at a cost which was more than double all the pecuniary benefits which we had acquired by trade in all that vast possession. 'But people may say then, perhaps, "You will give up India," and I should say "No." I do not say anything of the kind, but I think it would be worth while to become a little more rational about it.'

This great question of the government of India is one to which Mr. Bright has ever paid the closest and most special attention. Our responsibilities in connection with that gigantic dependency have always weighed heavily upon him; and had he so chosen, upon the accession of Mr. Gladstone's first Min-

istry to office, he might have succeeded to the very important and onerous office of Secretary of State for India. The soundness of some of his views upon India has already been proved, and it is possible that conviction may follow with regard to others. England still holds her vast Indian Empire by a more direct sovereignty than was once the case; and by excellent government she may possibly hold it for a long time to come; but he must be a bold man who would venture to predict the perpetual and undivided sway of Great Britain over a territory so immense, with its ever-increasing myriads of population.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE REFORM QUESTION IN 1858–9.

Parliamentary Reform in 1858.—Mr. Locke King's County Franchise Bill.—The Ballot.—Reform Campaign in the Provinces.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Points of his proposed Reform scheme.—Our Foreign Policy.—Reception of Mr Gibson and Mr. Bright at Manchester.—What a Reform Bill should include.—Mr. Bright at Edinburgh and Glasgow.—The Derby-Disraeli Reform Bill of 1859.—Debate on the Second Reading.—Speech by Mr. Bright.—Defeat of the Government.—Dissolution of Parliament.—Election at Birmingham.—Opposition to Mr. Bright.—Scene of the Nomination.—Animated Speech by Mr. Bright.—Great Liberal Victory.—Meeting of Parliament.—Spirited Debate.—Motion carried against the Government.—Their Resignation.—A Palmerston Ministry formed.—Important Debate on Financial Policy.—Miscellaneous Questions.—Mr. Cobden at Rochdale.—Reform Conference in London.

FROM India we now pass to a subject of great interest in domestic politics, and one in which for many years Mr. Bright played a very prominent part, viz., Parliamentary Reform. For a considerable period before Mr. Bright's winter campaign of 1858, it had been generally conceded that the great Act of 1832 required to be supplemented by another and still larger measure of political enfranchisement. Hitherto, however, the question had either been trifled with, or matters of greater moment had been allowed to damp the reforming zeal of Governments.

But in the session of 1858, several measures were introduced into the House of Commons bearing collaterally upon the subject of Parliamentary Reform. Mr. Locke King brought in a bill for the abolition of the property qualification heretofore required for the representatives of English and Irish constituencies. The Conservative Government supported the proposition, and Mr. King's bill was carried. It also passed the House of Lords, and became law. No such happy fate, however, awaited its author's further proposition for the extension of the franchise for counties in England and Wales to occupiers at £10 per annum—a measure which had been brought forward in several previous sessions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer now said that as the Government intended to give their consideration to the whole subject of Parliamentary Reform, he felt it his duty to move the previous question. Leave was nevertheless given to bring in the bill, and its second reading was

afterwards carried by a large majority; but in consequence of the lateness of the period, and the pressure of other matters, Mr. Locke King was compelled to abandon his measure for that session. Mr. Caird also made an unsuccessful attempt to carry a bill for the assimilation of the county franchise of Scotland with that of England. Lastly, on the 8th of June, Mr. Berkeley brought on his annual resolution in favour of vote by ballot. The motion was opposed by Sir G. C. Lewis and Lord Palmerston, who made a good deal of the alleged failure of the ballot in the United States. Mr. Bright, premising that he should not go either to the United States or to Australia, demanded that the measure should be considered with reference to the conditions of our own society; and insisted that this country—where there were so many incentives to undue influence, and so little power of resisting it—was of all countries that in which this question should be fairly considered. And if the remedy was good it ought to be applied. Describing the secret operation of influence in our electoral system, he cited cases proving the intolerable working of the screw spoken of by Mr. Berkeley. We must have a Reform Bill, and no measure of that kind would be complete without the great principle of the ballot. He asked whether it was not a fact that, in every petition for Parliamentary Reform, the House was asked to include the ballot, and that at almost every public meeting held for years past, the establishment of secret voting by the ballot was made a cardinal point? Was the House prepared to disregard this? Observing that the ballot was no sacred principle, but a mere matter of electoral machinery, no member, he said, could be charged with inconsistency in consenting to try this great experiment. Mr. Bright appealed to both sides of the House to lay aside their fears, to have a little faith, and not to be misled by the flimsy arguments of Lord Palmerston, but for the sake of morality, and the tranquillity of the country, to give a candid and favourable consideration to Mr. Berkeley's proposition. The motion, however, was lost by 294 votes to 197.

In the ensuing October, Mr. Bright began his earnest and vigorous Reform campaign in the provinces. Disappointed with the lukewarmness which had crept over our public men in regard to this question, his language was of an unusually vehement character. Those who were opposed to Reform altogether alleged that he damaged his cause by the violence of his advocacy; but there are moments in the history of nations when even stronger language than Mr. Bright's would be justifiable. Every great benefactor and reformer is liable to the charge of

excessive zeal, yet without such zeal many of the greatest boons ever conferred upon the human race would still be wanting. However, in this matter let not us, his contemporaries, but posterity, judge Mr. Bright.

The first great meeting was held at Birmingham, under peculiar and memorable circumstances, on the 27th of October, 1858. Mr. Bright had just recovered from his serious illness, and nearly three years had elapsed since he was able to appear upon a public platform for the purpose of addressing any large body of his countrymen. This was, in addition, the first time upon which Mr. Bright had met his new constituents at Birmingham. In opening his speech he made some touching references to this fact, and expressed his gratitude to the Supreme for the signal favour which had been extended to him. Here the warm cheering which had greeted the speaker on first appearing before the vast audience in the Town Hall was renewed. After a graceful allusion to the sympathy which had been shown him in his affliction, and to the atonement which Birmingham had made for the passionate and ungenerous treatment of Manchester, the hon. member referred to the prevalent misrepresentation of his attitude in regard to the Crimean War. 'Now,' said Mr. Bright, 'after all is over except the tax-gatherer, and the sorrows of those who have lost their friends in the war, I will just in one sentence say that I am still unable to discover what compensation England has for the hundred millions of money she expended, or what compensation Europe has for the three hundred millions squandered by all the parties engaged in that frightful contest. Turning next to the question of Parliamentary Reform, he pointed out that within the last few years they had had four Governments pledged to Parliamentary Reform. All parties now pretended to be in love with it, but their speeches on the question reminded him of the condition of that deplorable Atlantic Cable, of which he read that 'the currents were visible, but the signals were wholly indistinct.' Mr. Bright next proceeded to show, by the aid of facts and statistics, that the Parliament, as then constituted, did not fairly represent the nation. The whole system of representation was unequal and dishonest; there were in the House of Commons 330 members (more than half the House) whose whole number of constituents did not amount to more than 180,000; while there were at the same time 24 members only whose constituents were upwards of 200,000 in number. There was, besides, the great significant fact that in Great Britain and Ireland five out of every six men you met had no vote. Mr. Bright then referred

at some length to the House of Lords, and drew a very unflattering picture of the typical peer. The House of Peers did not travel very fast,—even what was called a Parliamentary train was too fast for its nerves; in fact, it never travelled at all unless somebody shoved it. He would not attack the House of Lords, but the question between the Peers and the people was one which could not be evaded. The Peer too often gave his vote against those great measures on which the country had set its heart. Then too there was another kind of Peer which he was afraid to touch upon—'that creature of—what shall I say? —of monstrous, nay, even of adulterous birth—the Spiritual Peer.' They were always told that Peers were necessary as a check, and if that was so they answered their purpose admirably.

Discussing the question of the suffrage, Mr. Bright spoke in favor of a Rating Franchise, and he added that he knew no good reason why the franchise should not be as extensive in the counties as in the boroughs. He also advocated a more equal division of electoral power, the existing system being but a disgraceful fraud. Without redistribution of seats, representation would remain for the future very little better than a farce. The third great point which he insisted on was that any Reform Bill which pretended to be generally satisfactory to reformers must concede the shelter and protection of the ballot. 'Let us,' said Mr. Bright, 'have a real bill, a good bill, or no bill at all.' But the question at the moment was in the hands of the enemy, and he had his fears. As to the bugbear of 'Americanising' our institutions, if we were at liberty to draw science, products for our manufactures, and literature from every country in the world, why should we not, if we saw anything good in the politics of another country, be equally at liberty to take a lesson in that also? Those persons who affirmed that the franchise, the distribution, and the ballot, which operated so well in America, would be perilous in England, libelled the people of this country, and libelled our institutions.

Mr. Bright urged upon his hearers and the country the necessity of public meetings, of petitions, and when the proper time came, attendance at the polling-booths. Finally, he said, 'Shall we, even for a moment, be hopeless of our great cause? I feel almost ashamed even to argue it to such a meeting as this. I call to mind where I am, and who are those whom I see before me. Am I not in the town of Birmingham—England's central capital; and do not these eyes look upon the sons

of those who, not thirty years ago, shook the fabric of privilege to its base? Not a few of the strong men of that time are now white with age. They approach the confines of their mortal day. Its evening is cheered with the remembrance of that great contest, and they rejoice in the freedom they have won. Shall their sons be less noble than they? Shall the fire which they kindled be extinguished with you? I see your answer in every face. You are resolved that the legacy which they bequeathed to you, you will hand down in an accumulated wealth of freedom to your children. As for me, my voice is feeble. I feel now sensibly and painfully that I am not what I was. I speak with diminished fire; I act with a lessened force; but as I am, my countrymen and my constituents, I will, if you will let me, be found in your ranks in the impending struggle.'

A scene remarkable for its enthusiasm followed this statement of Mr. Bright's programme on the great question then agitating the public mind.

On the following day the hon. gentleman further discussed the details of the Reform question with a deputation from the Reformers' Union, and on the 29th he attended a banquet given in the Town Hall. Although the speech which he delivered on this occasion was devoted chiefly to a defence of his views on Foreign Policy, we shall preserve the consecutiveness of our narrative by dealing with it in its due order. A letter was read from Mr. Cobden, in which he said, 'The electors of Birmingham may justly feel proud of their present position. Their reversal of the sentence passed upon Mr. Bright by his late constituents has been ratified by the approving voice of the country and of the civilized world.'

Mr. Bright began his address by reference to an alleged difference of sentiment between his constituents and himself in matters of foreign policy, and he asked how any man should dare to say to any one of his countrymen, because he happened to hold a different opinion on questions of great public policy, that therefore he was un-English, and was to be condemned as anti-national? He then proceeded to demonstrate that the views which he and his friends held in this respect were not novel or unpatriotic, but were associated with the names of many of the most eminent statesmen that ever presided over the legislative councils of England. He illustrated this assertion by a reference to the declared opinions of Sir Robert Walpole, Mr. Charles James Fox, Earl Gray, and Sir Robert Peel. Dealing with the results of the sacrifices made to the war spirit, Mr. Bright said he believed he understated the same when he

alleged that in pursuit of a Will-o'-the-wisp ('the liberties of Europe and the balance of power'), there had been extracted from the industry of the people of this small island no less an amount than £2,000,000,000 sterling. Then came this graphic passage:—

'When I try to think of that sum of £2,000,000,000, there is a sort of vision passes before my mind's eye. I see your peasant laborer delve and plough, sow and reap, sweat beneath the summer's sun, or grow prematurely old before the winter's blast. I see your noble mechanic, with his manly countenance and his matchless skill, toiling at his bench or his forge. I see one of the workers in our factories in the north, a woman—a girl it may be—gentle and good, as many of them are, as your sisters and daughters are—I see her intent upon the spindle, whose revolutions are so rapid that the eye fails altogether to detect them, or watching the alternating flight of the unresting shuttle. I turn again to another portion of your population, which, "plunged in mines, forgets a sun was made," and I see the man who brings up from the secret chambers of the earth the elements of the riches and greatness of his country. When I see all this, I have before me a mass of produce and of wealth which I am no more able to comprehend than I am that £2,000,000,000 of which I have spoken, but I behold in its full proportions the hideous error of your Government, whose fatal policy consumes in some cases a half, never less than a third, of all the results of that industry which God intended should fertilize and bless every home in England, but the fruits of which are squandered in every part of the surface of the globe, without producing the smallest good to the people of England.'

The speaker next observed that the great territorial families of England, which were enthroned at the Revolution, had followed their prey like the jackals of the desert: as a consequence of the foreign policy which he denounced, from the time of William III. wars had been multiplied, taxes increased, loans made, and the Government expenditure greatly augmented. 'There is no actuary in existence,' said Mr. Bright (in a passage of his speech which was warmly cheered, though it subsequently gave great offence in many quarters), 'who can calculate how much of the wealth, of the strength, of the supremacy of the territorial families of England has been derived from an unholy participation in the fruits of the industry of the people, which have been wrested from them by every device of taxation, and squandered in every conceivable crime of which a Government could possibly be guilty. The more you examine this matter, the more you will come to the conclusion which I have arrived at, that this foreign policy, this regard for "the liberties of Europe," this care at one time for "the Protestant interests," this excessive love for the "balance of power," is neither more nor less than a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain.' (*Great laughter.*)

The hon. member then proceeded to remark upon the great number and the extraordinary character of the treaties and obligations we had unnecessarily entered into with almost every European nation, and also with the East; and he showed how much the insurrection in India and the war with China arose from a policy which attributed English glory to this system. The notion that English trade had benefited by such proceedings was delusive, for all our colonies had been a loss to us, save that of Australia. Why, the consequence of entertaining such feelings as he had described had been that, within the last twenty years, our naval and military expenses had gone up from twelve to twenty-two millions per annum; and yet there was nobody that he knew who proposed to invade England. With regard to this fear of invasion, and the enormous expenditure it cost us in consequence, Mr. Bright said: 'There is no causeway to Britain; the free waves of the sea flow day and night for ever round her shores; and yet there are people going about with whom this hallucination is so strong that they do not merely discover it quietly to their friends, but they write it down in double-leaded columns, in leading articles,—nay, some of them actually get up on platforms and proclaim it to hundreds and thousands of their fellow-countrymen. I should like to ask you whether these delusions are to last for ever, whether this policy is to be the perpetual policy of England, whether these results are to go on gathering and gathering until there come, as come there must inevitably, some dreadful catastrophe on our country?'

Abuse and mismanagement, continued the speaker, existed with regard to the enormous sums raised, and an eminent mercantile authority had told him that he could manage the whole affairs of England at one-half less than the estimates which were voted every year. As to the fear of Cherbourg, had not France behaved honourably to us in the Crimean War; had she not helped us in China; were the people not told to fall down and worship the Emperor when he came to London; and was not our Queen received with acclamation when she visited Paris? Mr. Bright went on to insist that we could not consistently condemn France for behaviour which we had ourselves so much exhibited. He wanted to inaugurate a new revolution of opinion, one in which among other changes the great anomaly of such a rich country having to raise £7,000,000 for its pauper population, and the unhappy condition of a portion of our women, would be deeply considered. A duty now devolved upon the advanced members of Parliament and the

people of England different from that which would arise from accepting the history of Rome, or any pagan nation, as the test of national greatness. Two nights ago, said Mr. Bright in closing, he had addressed a vast assembly composed to a large extent of those who had no political power, and who had but limited means of informing themselves on these great subjects. Now he spoke to a somewhat different audience, and one which could help to affect sensibly and speedily the course of the Government:—

'May I ask you, then, to believe, as I do most devoutly believe, that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations, and for nations great as this of which we are citizens. If nations reject and deride that moral law, there is a penalty which will inevitably follow. It may not come at once, it may not come in our lifetime; but, rely upon it, the great Italian is not a poet only, but a prophet, when he says—

"The sword of heaven is not in haste to smite,
Nor yet doth linger."

We have experience, we have beacons, we have landmarks enough. We know what the past has cost us, we know how much and how far we have wandered, but we are not left without a guide. It is true we have not, as an ancient people had, Urim and Thummim—those oraculous gems on Aaron's breast—from which to take counsel, but we have the unchangeable and eternal principles of the moral law to guide us, and only so far as we walk by that guidance can we be permanently a great nation, or our people a happy people.'

The fight for Reform had now fairly begun, and in a short time the battle-field was changed from the Midlands, first to the north of England, and subsequently to Scotland. On the 10th of December a *soirée* was given in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, to Mr. Milner Gibson and Mr. Bright, for the purpose of congratulating the hon. member for Birmingham on his restoration to health; to celebrate the return of himself and his late colleague (Mr. Gibson) to Parliament for the boroughs of Birmingham and Ashton; and to thank them for their patriotic conduct during the last session of Parliament, as well as for their long and faithful services as representatives for the city of Manchester. This was the first occasion on which the two ex-members had appeared in the city since their rejection by that constituency. When Mr. Bright and Mr. Gibson made their appearance, the great organ gave out the familiar notes of 'Auld Lang Syne'; and by a spontaneous and as it were electric impulse, the huge gathering caught up the touching strain. Thrilling with enthusiasm as the distinguished guests entered the arena of their former triumphs, the

audience rose simultaneously, and accorded them a vehement, prolonged, and deafening reception. The heroes of the ovation struggled in vain to repress their emotion, and were visibly affected by the demonstration of feeling of which they were the objects. In that moment, the ingratitude of Manchester was condoned.

Mr. Bright had been chosen by an important conference of Parliamentary reformers, to elaborate, and in the ensuing session to propose, a new Reform Bill, and this fact lent additional interest to the proceedings. Mr. George Wilson, president of the Anti-Corn Law League of former days, presided. Mr. Milner Gibson having been first heard, Mr. Bright was called upon, but for some minutes was unable to proceed, in consequence of the renewed plaudits of the audience. Quiet having been at length restored, the hon. gentleman began his speech by a reference to the reception of himself and his friend, which appeared like the celebration of some great success. He then turned to the topic of the day by pointing out the fact that the present Ministry were the political descendants of those who, forty years ago, had massacred the citizens of Manchester when they were met for a purpose and on an occasion similar to the present. Next, he observed that what those present proposed was to discuss a question relative to themselves, the Commons of England, and which question had been brought before the country by the Government. He should like to put in as few words as possible what, in his opinion, the House of Commons should be. It should be a House composed of men sent up by the free election of so many of the people voting with such an equality of power as should give a real expression to the opinions of the nation. But could any person say it was so when five out of every six men had no more votes at the poll for a member of Parliament than if they lived in South America or in South Africa? Of the House of Commons, three hundred and thirty members were returned by less than one-sixth of that very small number of persons to whom the franchise was entrusted. The hon. member (as in one of his previous speeches) then went into some statistics to show how unequally the electoral franchise was distributed, the result of which was, he said, that a House of Commons so formed became for the most part, as he knew it to be, a sort of deputy to the House of Lords, and an organ of the great territorial interests of the country. It hated changes with an animosity that nothing could assuage; it hated economy, it hated equality of taxation. The Succession Duty was a glaring instance; the

Income Tax was another instance not less glaring. They gave to property vast influence in the government of the country, and they perpetually shielded property from the burden of taxation. It was the same before the Reform Bill as it was now. The speaker then proceeded to state that every great measure had been extorted by, and conceded to, the people, but had never been freely given even by the Legislature to the country, and instanced the repeal of the Corn Laws as occasioned by a famine, and not 'because the House of Lords or the House of Commons wished to grant it;' and now the Ballot was opposed, the Game Laws upheld, and the question of Church-rates, after years of discussion, was still unsettled, and all owing to undue territorial influence.

Mr. Bright went on to observe that the Government was at a deadlock without Parliamentary Reform, and the measure that he would propose as the basis of the franchise was all ready to his hands. He thus unfolded his scheme:—

'I find in all the parishes from the time of Queen Elizabeth—and, for anything I know, from the time of Alfred—I don't know how many hundred years it has lasted—a franchise with which everybody has been contented, which nobody has condemned, and which has done no harm to law, or order, or the security of property. I find that, when Parliament came to legislate for poor-law unions, they adopted this same franchise as the basis of the union franchise; when they came to legislate for the corporation, they adopted, with some restriction, the same franchise. Why tell me that this franchise does not act properly in the United States? For my argument I do not care whether it does or not. We have tried it here in our parishes, our unions, our corporations; and I say if it acts on the whole advantageously in those departments of representation, it may be trusted without danger in that more important representation which concerns our Imperial Legislature. . . Now what is it that I propose? That every householder, of course, because every householder is rated to the poor, shall have a vote; and if a man be not a householder strictly, but if he have an office, or a warehouse, or a stable, or land—if he have any property in his occupation which the poor law taxes—out of which he must contribute to the support of the poor, then I say I would give that man a vote.'

Again, dealing with the charge that we were 'Americanising' our institutions, the speaker quoted Lord John Russell and Lord Carlisle in support of his statements as to the general progress of the United States, and he expressed his regret that the latter nobleman should have shrunk from the conclusion which had been fairly deduced from his uttered opinions. We might refer to America as regards anything but politics. 'You may delight yourself with their charming poets—with Bryant, and Whittier, and Longfellow; you may interest and instruct yourself by their great historians—Bancroft and Prescott, and Motley; but if you ask how free popular

institutions are working among your own countrymen on the American continent, you are denounced as unpatriotic, and charged with treason to the House of Lords. Affirming that the cause of Reform was a just cause, and must sooner or later prevail, Mr. Bright said, in conclusion, 'From this platform I do not speak to you only—I speak to all my countrymen. If they wish for Reform, if they think me honest, informed, capable on this question, if they have any confidence in those with whom I am associated, then let them meet in their cities, their towns, their villages, in country parishes even, where free speech is not forbidden,—let them meet and speak; let them resolve, and let them petition. If they do this, I think I can promise them that before long they will be in full possession and in free exercise of those political rights which are not more necessary to their national interests than they are consistent with the principles of their boasted Constitution.'

By this time the country had become thoroughly stirred once more upon the great question. The consistent advocates of Reform began to ask themselves whether the members of the Derby Ministry, who professed to be very anxious to settle the matter, could after all be true friends to the cause. Mr. Bright, who, as it was remarked at the time, had to some extent thrown his protecting ægis over the Government in the previous session, now let it be clearly understood that he would be no party to a sham Reform Bill. There was much talk amongst the advanced reformers of again rallying themselves under that old and long-tried friend of the movement, Lord John Russell. Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli were much distrusted, and a measure was looked for from those who had long been the acknowledged leaders of the country upon Reform. Under these circumstances, Mr. Bright went to Scotland, there to agitate the question further. Appearing first at Edinburg, he addressed a meeting in the Municipal Hall, one of the largest public rooms in the city, but it proved totally inadequate to contain the vast crowds who assembled to hear the popular orator, and thousands were unable to procure admission. Mr. Bright spoke at great length, insisting, though with change of rhetorical treatment, upon the points which in previous addresses he had declared to be necessary and essential in the settlement of the Reform controversy.

Mr. Bright had now formulated a scheme for a bill on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, and its provisions were made known. Its main features were as follows. In the first place, the borough franchise was to be conferred upon all who were

rated to the relief of the poor, and on all lodgers who paid a rent of £10; no more freemen were to be created, and the county franchise it was proposed to reduce to £10 rental. In the next place, the returning officers' expenses were to be put on the county or borough rate; and it was further provided that votes should be taken by ballot. It was proposed to disfranchise fifty-six English, twenty-one Scotch, and nine Irish boroughs; and one member was to be taken from each of thirty-four other boroughs. The seats thus obtained were to be distributed according to population among the larger towns, counties, and divisions of counties in the United Kingdom. A few days after his appearance at Edinburgh, viz., on the 21st of December, Mr. Bright once more spoke upon Reform, the occasion being a great meeting at Glasgow. He observed that it was now generally conceded that the figures were all on the side of the reformers; and as to the charge that he used the same figures and facts in his various speeches, he asked what would be said if he used different facts and figures each time he spoke. It was the same case and the same grievance. We had at least six millions of grown men in the United Kingdom, yet there were not more than one million who had votes. Replying to the charge that he was taking numbers only, and neglected property, Mr. Bright adduced statistics to show that whether we took numbers, or industry and wealth, or what was comprehended as political independence—he did not care what test was used—there was the same startling, impressive result, that these great populations and great interests were most inadequately represented in the House of Commons under the existing system of representation.

The speaker next observed that there was no novelty in his opinions upon this question; they were the opinions which Mr. Fox and Lord Grey proposed to the House of Commons in 1797. 'I am no conjurer, I have no specific for national happiness, I offer you nothing made up of conundrums and tricks, but I bring before you what I believe to be a rational and substantial project for the arrangement of our representation, which, I venture to say, has had, during the last sixty years, the sanction and approval of many of the greatest minds of the greatest patriots of our country.' He then defended the proposed rating franchise, which according to some was to swamp everybody, and which men stood aghast at. With a passing reference to the lodger and county franchises, he proceeded to allude to the Ballot, respecting which he was supposed to have changed his opinion, because he did not mention it at Edinburgh. The call

for this measure would be more strong and imperative after a change in the franchise. 'I cannot comprehend,' remarked Mr. Bright, 'why any man should oppose the Ballot. I can understand its importance being exaggerated, but I cannot understand the man who thinks it would be likely to inflict injury upon the country. Every good influence, every legitimate influence, would still exist. The rich man would still be rich and would still be powerful; in the nature of things it must be so. The educated man, the intellectual man, the benevolent man, the man of religious and saintly life, would continue to exercise a most beneficent influence, which the Ballot, I believe, would not in the slightest degree impair; but the influence of the landlord, of the creditor, of the customer—the influence of the strong and unscrupulous mind over the feeble and the fearful—that influence would be as effectually excluded as I believe it could be by any human contrivance whatsoever.' From its moral aspect, the question of the Ballot was even still more important, and there was no proposition received with such unanimity as that the Ballot should form a portion of the coming Reform.

Mr. Bright next insisted upon a good redistribution scheme, and proceeded to point out that a real measure of Reform was as much wanted for the security and welfare of the middle classes of society as it was for the operative classes. Many attempts had been made to frighten the middle classes, but all the predictions of the ruling classes as to the effects of progressive measures had been utterly falsified. Touching upon the land laws, and their operation in Scotland, the hon. gentleman asked if there was any reason why land should not be as free as machinery, or ships, or household furniture, or cattle, or the goods and manufactures in the warehouses. He added, however, 'I am no advocate for a law to force the division of land. I do not want any landlord to be compelled to have a greater or smaller number of tenants; but I say the system of legislation in regard to primogeniture, and to entails and settlements, which is intended to keep vast estates in one hand through successive generations, and to prevent that economical disposition and change of property which is found so advantageous in every other kind of property—I say that this state of things is full of the most pernicious consequences, not only to the agricultural classes, but to all other classes of our countrymen, since all are affected by it.'

Dealing next with affairs of State, Mr. Bright remarked that in our Home affairs we had a very open system of government;

but when we came to Foreign policy we were no longer Englishmen; we were no longer free; we were recommended not to inquire. There was, however, the great fact that since 1815 there had been paid in connection with Foreign policy more than £1,000,000,000 out of the industry of the population. And yet there was a supposed necessity for armaments twice as large as were necessary twenty-five years ago. Governments drifted into war, and the people could not help themselves. He protested against the conduct of public affairs remaining with a few leading families, who enjoyed all the emoluments and all the power. Not until the secret and irresponsible doings of the Foreign Office were placed under the free control of a Parliament elected by the great body of the people of the United Kingdom, would the industry of the people be secured from that gigantic taxation to which it had been subjected during the last hundred and fifty years. Mr. Bright, in concluding, exhorted the people to examine this matter thoroughly for themselves, and sat down with these personal allusions to himself: 'I come amongst you that we may deliberate on those great questions on which our success and our prosperity depend. You know—at least if you do not know it I will tell you—that I am no frequenter of Courts. I have never sought for office or the emoluments of place. I have no craving for popularity. I think I have little of that which may be called the lust for fame. I am a citizen of a free country. I love my country, I love its freedom; but I believe that freedom can only be extended and retained by a fair and honest representation of the people; and it is because I believe this, that I am here to-night to ask you, through the power of your intelligence and your numbers, to step into the position which now opens up before you.'

Early in 1859 Mr. Bright addressed great meetings at Bradford and Rochdale, and then the field of controversy was removed to St. Stephen's. On the 28th of February Mr. Disraeli brought in the Government Reform Bill, which the right hon. gentleman explained was not to alter the limits of the franchise, but to introduce into the boroughs a new kind of franchise founded upon personal property. It was proposed to give votes to persons receiving £10 yearly from the funds, or £20 in pensions, as well as to graduates in the universities, ministers of religion, members of the legal and medical professions, and some other classes. The bill further recognized the principle of identity of suffrage between the counties and the towns, of which the effect would be to add 200,000 to the county constituencies. Lord John Russell complained that

the measure did little or nothing for the working classes, while Mr. Walpole and Mr. Henley retired from the Ministry because the new principle, of a like qualification for counties and boroughs, established in the bill, was utterly at variance with the traditions of the Conservative party. Mr. Bright held that a Government representing a party which had always opposed the extension of political power to the people ought not to have undertaken to settle this question. There were many points in the bill to which he took exception, but chiefly to the total exclusion of the working classes from power. The new franchises were, he said, absurd; they seemed intended merely to make it appear that something was given. Mr. Bright also insisted upon the dissatisfaction that would be created by the withdrawal of their county vote from freeholders in towns. It would have been better if Mr. Disraeli had adhered to the ancient maxims of his party, or had adopted a measure of his opponents, than had introduced a bill which must create anger and disgust throughout the country,—a bill which would disturb everything, irritate vast masses of the people, and settle nothing.

The measure was read a first time, but it was doomed to be wrecked on the second reading. The debate on this stage began on the 20th of March, and was sustained through seven nights. Lord John Russell moved an adverse amendment in a very vigorous speech, concluding with these words: 'With regard to this great question of Reform, I may say that I defended it when I was young, and I will not desert it now that I am old.' Mr. Horsman and others thought the bill could be altered in Committee; and Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, with much eloquence, pleaded on behalf of the measure, contending that in refusing the compromise offered, the opponents of the Government would plunge the country from end to end into a violent party-battle. Sir Hugh Cairns spoke pointedly of the compact between Lord John Russell and Mr. Bright, and asked whether it included the ballot and a redistribution of seats.

Mr. Bright, whose speeches out of doors had been severely criticized in some quarters, delivered a temperate yet effective speech against the bill. There was a singular unanimity of feeling against the measure, and he was surprised at Mr. Horsman's suggestion for turning the bill inside-out, seeing that the Government had parted with two eminent colleagues on account of differences on the very points they were discussing. The people understood by a Reform Bill a large enfran-

chisement, and larger, freer constituencies. The bill did not meet that demand. It got rid of the most independent electors from counties, and insidiously proposed to alter the boundaries of boroughs to complete the work. Yet all that had been done had the object of making the representation of counties more exclusively territorial. 'Is that desirable? Why, the 150 gentlemen elected by the territorial interest have been the chief difficulty in the way of carrying every measure demanded by the country. Ask Lord Lyndhurst, ask Sir James Graham, ask Lord Aberdeen, ask Mr. Disraeli, who in 1852 was turned out because he was forced to meet the demands of his party with regard to the malt-tax. Does any one believe that this is the sort of bill which Mr. Disraeli thinks the best for the country? He knows that this bill in its present shape is a bill framed to satisfy the prejudices, the scruples, the convictions, if you like, and the fears of the 150 country gentlemen who sit behind him.' Mr. Bright described the small boroughs as only a refuge for the politically destitute—a shelter for what are called 'deserving objects.' What would be the effect of the voting-paper system upon small boroughs? 'I know no limit whatever,' said the speaker, 'to the amount of corruption it may occasion.'

With regard to the exclusion of the working classes, Mr. Bright said that the bill told them they were dangerous, and that there were privileges which they ought not to share. The working classes had improved mentally, morally, and physically, and yet the government told them they were as dangerous and ignorant as they were twenty-seven years ago! Uniformity of franchise had been represented as a democratic proceeding, but as he was not himself very democratic, on that account it had no charms for him. No power could keep the boroughs at £10, and unless the idea of uniformity were given up, the county franchise must come down. Answering the taunt that nobody cared about Reform, Mr. Bright said that there would be agitations during the coming autumn and winter. 'I happen to have been to some of the largest towns of this country, and I have seen meetings exceeding in number, and exceeding in influence, I believe almost every meeting that was held by the Anti-Corn-Law League during the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The populations you are about to disappoint and defy,—what have they done? They have conquered everything they have grappled with hitherto. I do not speak of distant realms conquered under your banners, but of arts and manufactures, and

all that tends to wealth and civilization. Do you think that this population will not also conquer a much larger share of their political rights than in your present mood you appear disposed to give them?' Next addressing himself to the country gentlemen, Mr. Bright said the men in the North had no fear of the people. Although a violent disturbance would be more damaging to them than to others, a large proportion of the employers of labour were in favour of extending the suffrage, for they believed it would remove discontent, and elevate and strengthen the people. 'I assure you that resistance is not always conservative,' he said in conclusion. 'I profess to be, in intention, as conservative as you,—I believe, infinitely more so, if you look forward twenty or thirty years into the future. Was not Free Trade conservative? And yet you resisted it to the last. I recollect occasions when the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us of the cruelty practised on the ruined and betrayed agriculturist. I recollect he addressed us on the condition of the farm-labourer two or three years afterwards; and since that time his condition has been improving rapidly. Is not prosperity conservative? Is not peace conservative? Any energies I possess I have devoted to their advance; I have endeavoured to stand on the rules of political economy, and to be guided by the higher rules of true morality; and when advocating a measure of Reform larger than some are prepared to grant, I appear in that character, for I believe a substantial measure of Reform would elevate and strengthen the character of our population; that, in the language of the beautiful prayer read here every day, it would tend "to knit together the hearts of all persons and estates within this realm." I believe it would add to the authority of the decisions of Parliament; and I feel satisfied it would confer a lustre, which time could never dim, on that benignant reign under which we have the happiness to live.'

Amongst subsequent speakers was Mr. Gladstone, who said he was extremely desirous of seeing this question settled, and that he should give his vote neither to the Government nor to party, when he voted to negative the resolution of Lord John Russell. Mr. Disraeli, in closing the debate, said the Government had been sustained in all its arduous struggles by a conviction of the justice of the people of England; and they were sustained by it at that moment, amid all the manœuvres of Parliamentary intrigue, and all the machinations of party warfare. When the House went to a division, great excitement prevailed on all sides, and this was enhanced when the numbers were

announced as follows: For the second reading of the bill, 291; against, 330; majority against the Government, 39.

The Ministry now determined to dissolve Parliament, and to remit the question to the constituencies. An immediate dissolution was pressed for, and Mr. Bright admitted that the Government had taken the constitutional course they were bound to take. But while he applauded the course Ministers had taken, he protested against the attempt of Mr. Disraeli to make a little political capital by representing that the country had the option between his own measure, conservative in its character, and one that was revolutionary. He observed that it was very odd this Conservative bill should have had more determined opponents on the Government side of the House than on the other. For himself, he was not afraid of the tribunal before which the Government were about to bring this question. Any measure of Reform he should propose would be on the lines of that of 1832; and if that were revolutionary, he did not understand the meaning of the term. If the Government made such a charge as this, when they went to the hustings they must take the consequences. He would like to go to this election in a spirit of calmness, and to discuss the question fairly. This attitude was not that of a bigoted partisan on the one hand, or that of one who recoiled from the consequences of his advocacy on the other.

Parliament was prorogued on April 19, but several days before this Mr. Bright attended a meeting at Rochdale, called to promote the return of Mr. Cobden, who was then in America. Mr. Bright was in high feather on this occasion, and his tribute to Mr. Cobden is worth quoting for several reasons. Mr. Cobden was one of themselves, he said, 'and it was quite likely that his ancestry were seated in one of the English counties at the time of the Norman Conquest, but he never boasted that those ancestors came over here with the Conquerer. He (Mr. Cobden) began by agitating the Anti-Corn-Law question, and they knew what had been the result. He was sent to Parliament, and became a great person in the House—so great that in 1846 Lord J. Russell, who was then about to form an Administration, wrote to him and offered him a seat in his Cabinet. Mr. Cobden, however, did not accept the offer, and went abroad.' Mr. Bright concluded by saying that although he should give Lord John Russell's bill a favourable consideration, he had not given up the thought of bringing in at some future day his own, if he were returned again to Parliament.

Mr. Bright himself was opposed at Birmingham by Mr. T.

D. Acland, who in his address said that he had been invited by 'a numerous and respectable body of Liberal electors' to contest the borough. As to the character of the electors who invited Mr. Acland, controversy would now be useless; but history records that he was lamentably mistaken when he went on to observe that he had 'no fear of the result.' Mr. Scholefield, the second recognized Liberal candidate, was a true colleague, and took a very generous estimate of the situation, as well as a magnanimous view of the claims of Mr. Bright. 'It is not,' he said, 'in this case that the Conservatives love me more than Mr. Bright. It is, perhaps, that for certain reasons they dislike me a little less. And this is easily explained. I have not the power, the influence, or the eloquence of Mr. Bright, and of course I am not a man of so much mark. They well know that if they turned me out of the House of Commons to-morrow, they would do little harm to the cause of progress; but if they turned out Mr. Bright, they would level at it a dangerous and deadly blow.'

This self-abnegation on the part of Mr. Scholefield was warmly appreciated. It was well known that the opposition was really aimed at Mr. Bright's re-election; but the result proved that the electors of Birmingham were not only desirous of endorsing the past action of their illustrious representative, but were well aware as to the nature of the coalition of bastard Liberalism and uncompromising Conservatism arrayed against him. Mr. Bright arrived in Birmingham on the 23rd, and at once began his arduous campaign. On the day of his arrival he addressed three meetings, two of them in the open air. In these speeches he spoke chiefly of the iniquity of England engaging in the impending Continental war. On the 25th, a great town's meeting was held in the Town Hall, for the purpose of considering the claims of the candidates for the representation of the borough. The proceedings amounted to a grand demonstration in favour of the sitting members. Mr. Acland and his friends did not attend. Nearly all the men who took part in the public business of Birmingham were present in the orchestra, behind the Mayor.

Mr. P. H. Muntz proposed a resolution to the effect that in the opinion of the meeting Messrs. Scholefield and Bright were fit and proper persons to represent Birmingham in the new Parliament. Mr. Muntz said that Mr. Bright was something more than the member for Birmingham—he was the member for Great Britain. The prolonged cheering which followed this remark showed the estimation in which the junior member was

held. Mr. Alderman Lloyd seconded the resolution, remarking that the electors had unanimously chosen Mr. Bright in his absence two years ago. When he asked the question, 'Does Birmingham recant?' the whole audience with one accord shouted a tremendous 'No.'

After Mr. Scholefield had spoken, Mr. Bright stepped forward, and was received with round after round of cheering. Having made some preliminary observations, he said that on the question of Reform their opponents had dragged their anchors—they had abandoned every position which in past times, and until very recently, they had occupied. Their glorious constitution was, under their own hands, going down like old furniture at a Dutch auction. Coming to his opponent, Mr. Bright remarked that the Tory party had sent to some distance, 'I don't know how far, but at all events they go some 150 miles off, and they find a gentleman who for the last ten years has been entirely secluded from political life. In all probability, and perhaps most unconsciously, they misrepresented to him the state of opinion in Birmingham; they bring him down here, and they trot him out before several of their supporters. I don't mean to say that this horse has been down, or that he is spavined, but at any rate any one reading his speeches—to continue this description of language—comes to the conclusion that he is at best an unbroken colt who has never really been in harness. If you ask him questions, you see at once that, with the greatest possible disposition to be amiable, and the same disposition to be liberal, you are asking him questions with which you are altogether familiar, and to which he is altogether unacquainted.' As to the changed attitude of the Conservatives generally on the Reform question, the speaker asked, 'Ought we not to discover the signs of the times—that "the winter of our discontent" is past, and that under the genial sun of more education, more physical comfort, more intelligence amongst the people, the ice is breaking on every side, and even that party who so long insulted the people, and ruled them so long as they dared, and so long as they could, with a rod of iron, is being broken up, and the great popular party is every day becoming more omnipotent in this kingdom?' Success consolatory to themselves, and glorious to the country, undoubtedly awaited their efforts. On the question of foreign policy, Mr. Bright added, 'Whatever may be your opinion, whatever the opinion of any class of my countrymen, let it be fairly understood that I am committed irrevocably, so far as I have any influence, to the entire abstention of England from any meddling whatsoever.

. . . . I value the blood, I value the sweat, I value the comfort, the lives, the homes, the happiness of the people of this country. Never for one single moment, at the behest of power, or at the call of popular frenzy and popular clamour, shall any man be able to charge me with being accessory to a policy which should sacrifice the happiness of the common people on the altar of sanguinary war.' On the motion of Mr. George Edmonds, seconded by Mr. Alderman Baldwin, a resolution of thanks to the retiring members was carried by acclamation.

The nomination took place on the 28th, amid a scene of extraordinary excitement, the Town Hall being crammed to excess. The enthusiasm was such, that the lungs of the Birmingham electors sustained them for fifteen minutes in cheering Mr. Bright and his colleague. Mr. P. H. Muntz proposed, and Mr. Alderman Lawden seconded, the nomination of Mr. Scholefield; and Mr. Alderman Lloyd proposed, and Mr. G. Edmonds seconded, that of Mr. Bright. Mr. H. Van Wart next nominated Mr. Thomas Dyke Acland, but Mr. Sampson Lloyd, on rising to second the nomination, was met by an indescribable torrent of invective and interruption. He could not secure the attention of the assembly for a single moment. The candidates being called upon, Mr. Scholefield rose first, and was listened to with respect and attention.

When Mr. Bright rose, there was unbounded enthusiasm. He began by some allusions to his opponents, and the ill-starred destiny of their candidate; and coming to his own personal apology, remarked that for sixteen years he had sat in the House of Commons, and during that time there had been no charge brought against him of political inconsistency, of unfaithfulness to his trust, of self-seeking in any way, or of being found at any time a hanger-on of political parties. 'I have had the satisfaction—the high and glorious satisfaction—of being one of those through whose instrumentality was gained the first battle of free industry, by which were proclaimed glad tidings to all the sons of toil, not in England only, but throughout all the world.' He then charged Government with having in the past strangled the industry of the nation, and inveighed strongly against the system of expenditure upon vast armies and navies, etc. The speaker next enlarged upon the inequalities of electoral representation, and afterwards in a very impassioned part of his speech said, 'Let me tell you that, whatever your institutions be, those that exist across the Atlantic or those that exist here, or those that existed awhile ago in France—whatever be the form of your institutions, it

you have in your midst 400,000 armed men, whose whole business is war, who are separated to a large extent from citizenship, who don't live at home, but who live under canvas or in barracks, there can be no security,—not ten years', not five years', not six months' security,—for anything whatsoever that deserves the name of civil liberty.' Having spoken most eloquently against England being dragged into any war at that critical juncture, Mr. Bright thus defended himself on another point: 'There are persons, and there was one in the House of Commons, a Minister of the Crown, who only the other day, I am told, for I did not notice the passage, had the audacity to taunt me, not with having criticised the House of Lords, but with having spoken in disparagement of the Crown of England. Now,' continued the speaker, amid vehement cheering, 'whoever said this, on whatever occasion, I throw the slander in his teeth. The Crown of England will never be jeopardized by a prosperous and contented people.' Subsequently, Mr. Bright once more announced his political position: 'I am for peace, for retrenchment, and for reform—thirty years ago the great watchwords of the great Liberal party; and whosoever may feel it worth his while to depart from that watchword, to pronounce other Shibboleths, so long as that flag floats, so long at least shall I be found one of the steadfast soldiers under it.' He and such as himself had been the very saviours of the order they were charged with destroying—the aristocracy; but they had come to the time when no institution, however deeply rooted in tradition or sentiment, could dare with impunity and safety to stand against the opinion of the people of this great nation. He had never been an official servant of the Crown; he had sought no such distinction, nor did he seek it now, although it was no small honour; and he concluded with this justifiable boast, 'If I am anything in political life, I strive to be at least a servant of the people and of truth. I have laboured for them; I have spent many of the choicest years, and the chiefest portion of my time, in what I believe was an honest devotion to their cause.'

Mr. Bright never delivered a finer or more telling electioneering speech than this. He was followed by Mr. Acland, who, notwithstanding the appeals of the Liberal candidates on his behalf, could only be heard by the reporters, and by them but very indistinctly. The electors were evidently very impatient of the opposition offered to Mr. Bright's return. Some one hundred and fifty persons only having held up their hands for Acland, as against the thousands for Scholefield and Bright,

a poll was demanded for the former, after the declaration of the Mayor. The temper of the whole town may be best understood from the fact that although Mr. Van Wart, the proposer of Mr. Acland, was a man highly esteemed in Birmingham, and had been the constant friend of liberal and progressive measures, he could not obtain a hearing, but after standing for a quarter of an hour was compelled to sit down and read his speech to the reporters. When the poll was declared on the following day, it became apparent how weak was the coalition on behalf of Mr. Acland. The numbers were: for Mr. Scholefield, 4,623; Mr. Bright, 4,492; and Mr. Acland, 1,569. Mr. Bright was therefore nearly three thousand votes ahead of his opponent. On the same day Mr. Cobden was elected for Rochdale without opposition.

On the 31st of May, the non-electors of Birmingham entertained the members for the borough at dinner in the Town Hall. Mr. J. A. Langford presided, supported by Messrs. Alderman Lloyd, Charles Sturge, G. Edmonds, and other prominent Liberals. Mr. Bright's speech on the occasion was devoted chiefly to two topics—the franchise, and the war upon the Continent. With regard to the former, he wished to ask those who knew what the non-electors and working men of Birmingham were, what there was so dreadful in them that they should be excluded from the franchise? Whence the terror entertained on that subject by the Newdegates and Spooners, and from what cause did it proceed? The hon. member ridiculed the idea that if the franchise was extended to the present non-electoral bodies it would be the means of sending up men to Parliament bent only on legislating for their own class, or for a class interest. Having dilated upon the many anomalies in the representative system, Mr. Bright adverted to the war then in progress on the Continent—the war between France and Italy and Austria. He had been almost stoned in the streets because he thought and said that the blood of Englishmen should not be poured out to sustain a tottering and decrepid Mahommedan power. But now he found himself not alone on this question. The queen had issued a proclamation of neutrality; Ministers had announced that such would be their policy, and they were supported by the newspaper press. The hon. member strongly condemned a warlike spirit and policy, and although they were met in evil times he hoped for better days.

Parliament met on the 31st of May, and the swearing in of members was proceeded with. On the 6th of June an open

conference of the Liberal party was held at Willis's Rooms. Great unanimity prevailed, and it was decided to move an amendment to the Address. Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston stated their readiness to accept office on the basis of progressive measures, and Mr. Bright rendered good service by disclaiming any desire to impose upon the more moderate section of the party advanced opinions for which they were not prepared. He drew, however, from Lord John Russell a declaration that his lordship intended to adhere fully to the propositions for electoral Reform stated by him at the close of the preceding Parliament.

On the following day the battle over the Address began in the House of Commons, when the Marquis of Hartington moved the following amendment: 'We beg humbly to submit to your Majesty that it is essential to the satisfactory result of our deliberations, to the securing the success of our councils, and to the facilitating the discharge of the high functions of your Majesty, that your Majesty's Government should possess the confidence of this House and of the country, and we deem it to be our duty respectfully to represent to your Majesty that such confidence is not reposed in your Majesty's present Government.' The debate was very animated. Mr. Disraeli was spirited, humorous, and epigrammatic. He made a strong attack upon Sir James Graham (which that right hon. gentleman afterwards returned with interest), and alluded in amusing terms to the compact which had been entered into at Willis's Rooms.

Mr. Bright gave at length his reasons for supporting the amendment. He did not rise to defend Lord Palmerston, and had no facts to convince him that the Government had not done all in their power to prevent the war now raging in Italy; but as to the neutrality to which the Government had pledged themselves, he wanted to know whether it was real or pretended. The question applied almost entirely to France. The increase of our naval force in the Mediterranean, the high bounties offered for enlistment in the navy, and the formation of rifle corps, were not directed against Austria; and was it not likely, or even inevitable, that these preparations would destroy in the minds of the French Government and people all confidence in our professions of neutrality? There was no reason to distrust the Emperor of the French; there was no increased cause of suspicion; yet in Germany the general opinion was that the Government of England was disposed rather to side with Austria than with France. He did not blame the present Ministers for all this; but he could not confide in a Government whose neutrality was to be

found in continued and gigantic preparations for war. No doubt from the next Government there would be the same professions of neutrality; but with regard to France, all classes of the people would feel that there would be somewhat more of sympathy towards France on the part of their successors than, as far as he knew, was entertained by the present Government. With regard, however, to the personal alliance between England and France, it did not in his opinion add to the dignity or to the advantage of either nation; he should prefer a generous and dignified conduct on the part of both Governments to an alliance that seemed to separate them from other nations.

In a passage which created much laughter and cheering, Mr. Bright referred to the sort of bait thrown out by Mr. Disraeli —what the anglers call having a cast—the throwing out of a fly on these benches to see if anybody would rise. But although the Tory party, or the Conservative party, or the Conservative-Liberal party (for the hon. gentlemen opposite had so many *aliases* that he knew not what to call them), had always been ready to receive men of capacity in their ranks, it was only under very stringent conditions. They had cast off Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gladstone, when these distinguished men had done something most beneficial to the country. But their rancour had done immense harm to their own party, for it had enabled Mr. Disraeli to become their leader. When the amusement which this sally created had subsided, Mr. Bright in few words stated his grounds for the course he was then taking: 'I say that the Government has not, upon the rules of Parliamentary practice, so far as we know, the confidence of the House of Commons. I believe if they were to pursue the course they have taken with regard to European affairs, the neutrality which they profess will not be maintained in practice. And I believe with respect to the question of Reform, which they have done their utmost to damage during the present session, that they will endeavour to betray it in the session which is to come. I think that with a new Government a more friendly feeling with France is likely to be preserved. I think also that we should have laid on the table at an early period a measure of Reform which will be distinct and considerable, and one which it may be the duty of the House and the people to accept.' But his support of any Government would depend upon their measures and their policy.

When the division came to be taken, it was found that the Government were outvoted, the numbers being—For the amendment, 323; against, 310: majority against the Government,

13. The result was received with tremendous cheering. Lord Hartington nominated the Committee, which consisted of the mover and seconder, Lord Palmerston, Lord J. Russell, Mr. Sidney Herbert, and other members. Loud cries were heard for the addition of Mr. Bright's name—the hon. gentleman having contributed probably as much as any one to the downfall of the Government, but it was not added to the list. The House was one of the largest ever known. Out of a total number of 654 members, 637 recorded their votes. Amongst those who gave their votes for the Government were Mr. Gladstone, Lord Elcho, Mr. Cobbett, and Mr. Roebuck.

The Derby Government resigned, and a new Administration was formed, with Lord Palmerston as Premier, Lord John Russell as Foreign Secretary, and Mr. Gladstone as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Cardwell ultimately became President of the Poor Law Board in the room of Mr. Milner Gibson, who went to the Board of Trade in place of Mr. Cobden, who had been designated for this post, but declined to join the Ministry.

On the 21st of July, on the motion for going into committee of ways and means, Mr. Disraeli raised an important debate on the financial policy of the late Government, which he contended had been perfectly successful. He criticized his rival's financial scheme, but the most important feature of his speech was a declaration to the effect that no country could continue to raise seventy millions a year, as England was then doing, by taxation in time of peace. A more economical management of the public resources was therefore essential, and to render reductions safe, the Government must diligently prosecute a policy of peace and neutrality. They must abstain from interference in the discussions at the forthcoming European Congress. Mr. Gladstone, in his reply, echoed the sentiment that every effort should be made to preserve and strengthen the friendship between England and France; and he declared himself most anxious to reduce our naval and military armaments, when other nations had given a similar attestation to their pacific promises.

The moment when these two great party leaders were thus in accord naturally seemed an auspicious one to Mr. Bright, and the friends of peace and retrenchment generally. Mr. Bright, following the Chancellor of the Exchequer, accordingly gave utterance to his views on the questions raised with fulness and power. He began by congratulating Mr. Disraeli on having become a convert to the views long advocated by himself and Mr. Cobden, and went on to give a qualified approval of the financial measures of the Government. But on the ques-

tion of the income tax he strongly expressed his opinion that it should not be made permanent until a distinction was drawn between permanent and precarious incomes. Mr. Bright also described the grievances inflicted upon the trading and commercial community by the unequal operation of the succession duties, and contended that probate should be levied equally upon all kinds of property. Dealing with the enormous growth of our naval and military estimates, he ridiculed with great emphasis our periodical invasion panics, and censured those, whether editors or peers, who used irritating language towards France or the French Emperor. The admission of the Emperor that he was making war against the mind of Europe, and that he made peace because the war was assuming dimensions not consistent with the interests of France, proved that the suspicions as to his future objects were unfounded.

Referring to the new principles upon which war was conducted, Mr. Bright said: 'Success in war no longer depends on those circumstances that formerly decided it. Soldiers used to look down on trade, and machine-making was, with them, a despised craft. No stars or garters, no ribbons or baubles bedecked the makers and workers of machinery. But what is war becoming now? It depends, not, as heretofore, on individual bravery, on the power of a man's nerves, the keenness of his eye, the strength of his body, or the power of his soul, if one may so speak; but it is a mere mechanical mode of slaughtering your fellow-men. This sort of thing cannot last. It will break down by its own weight. Its costliness, its destructiveness, its savagery will break it down; and it remains but for some Government—I pray that it may be ours!—to set the great example to Europe of proposing a mutual reduction of armaments.' The speaker continued that the French believed we were making an outcry about invasion to cover designs of invading them! The Emperor had shown that he desired to ally himself with England. Then why generate suspicions and create alarms? He closed his observations with this strong personal appeal to Lord Palmerston: —

'I am not accustomed to compliment the noble lord at the head of the Government. I have always condemned the policy which I thought wrong, but which, I have no doubt, the noble lord thought was best calculated to promote the interests of the country. I believe he was mistaken, and that he was importing into this century the politics of the last; but I do not think it would be possible to select a Minister who could better carry out a policy which would be just to France, and beneficial to ourselves, than the noble lord. Blood shines more, and attracts the vision of man more than beneficent measures. But the glory of such measures is far more lasting, and that glory the noble lord can achieve. I live among the people. I know their toils and their

sorrows, and I see their pauperism—for little better than pauperism is the lot of vast numbers of our countrymen from their cradles to their graves. It is for them I speak; for them I give my time in this assembly; and in heartfelt sorrow for their sufferings I pray that some statesman may take the steps which I have indicated. He who can establish such a state of things between France and England will do much to promote the future prosperity of two great nations, and will show that eighteen hundred years of Christian professions are at length to be followed by something like Christian practice.'

This speech attracted the attention of the French Emperor and his Government, and did much towards paving the way for Mr. Cobden's subsequent mission in connection with the Anglo-French Treaty.

During the sessions of 1858-59, in addition to the more important subjects with which we have dealt, several questions of moment arose upon which Mr. Bright addressed the House. In the former year, upon the motion to go into committee on Sir John Trelawny's Church Rates Abolition Bill, an amendment was moved by Mr. Packe for the rejection of the measure. Mr. Bright condemned this motion, seeing that much the same speeches had been made year after year in connection with Church-rates. On the general question, he said that it was in the interest of public honesty, of public morality, of public order, and of religion itself, that he asked the House to abolish this unjust and irritating system. If he were a churchman, he should be ashamed of hon. members who opposed this bill. They had evidently no faith in their Church. They had no faith in the zeal of their congregations, nor in the arguments or the eloquence of their pastors. They believed their churches would fall into ruin if this bill were to pass. He had never said anything half so severe of the members of the Established Church as that. To every member in the least disposed to assist with this bill, he (Mr. Bright) would say, 'Go with us as far as you can; the further you go, the pleasanter you will find the road; and let us, without further delay, proceed at once with this bill, the fate of which has been irrevocably decided.' The House decided to go into committee on the bill of 346 votes to 104.

One of the features of Mr. Disraeli's budget of 1858 was a proposition for the postponement of the payment of the Exchequer Bonds. On the 3rd of May, when the second reading of the Exchequer Bonds Bill was moved, a discussion arose upon the general financial policy of the Government. Mr. Bright held that the House was trying to do an impossible thing—viz., to make a very heavy taxation easy to bear. That taxation was shifted from shoulder to shoulder, and now it

rested upon the masses of the population, whose incomes were small, while their consumption of taxed articles was very large. A great deal of this taxation was owing to the foreign policy we were pursuing, which he discussed and strongly censured. 'Amity with all nations,' said Mr. Bright, 'justice and courtesy to all, but intimate political alliances with none. That is my policy.' He asked the House, in all seriousness, whether, instead of going on for the next five years as they had for the last five,—building vast ships which all good men hoped would never be used, and which all sensible men knew were not necessary for the purposes of security,—it would not be better to ask the French Government, 'Is it not possible to relieve your Exchequer and our Exchequer, to relieve your people and our people, from the pressure of this vast taxation, which we are constantly compelled to wring from them?' But instead of this, the cry of 'Give, give,' was repeated every session in respect of the army and the navy. 'I do not like the income tax,' continued the hon. member, 'any more than you do, but I know it is the duty of Parliament either to diminish our expenditure or to maintain the income tax, or some other tax of that kind; and that, as we acted in a foolish spirit in involving ourselves in this expenditure, so we are now acting a cowardly and immoral part in casting off the burden of expense from our shoulders, partly upon the great body of consumers now living, but mostly upon our posterity coming after us.'

Mr. Bright held strong views upon the war with China, and on the 4th of June, 1858, he took the opportunity of saying that had he been in the House when the China question was debated in the preceding year, he should have agreed entirely with Mr. Cobden. If an insult had been offered to England in connection with the lorcha *Arrow*, and if the Government felt bound to adopt the policy of Sir John Bowring, the power of England was amply sufficient to vindicate the honour of England without entering into complicated arrangements with other Powers. Who knew that the objects of France and England in China were the same? With regard to the effects of the hostilities, the last war did nothing to facilitate commercial relations with China, and the war in which they were then engaged would do no more. He made an appeal to the Government to face the question boldly, and bring the hostilities to a close. A few days later, during a discussion on the national defences, Mr. Bright demanded to know what was the precise amount of expenditure, or of force by land and sea, which was required in order to enable us to say that this country was

completely defended. Such questions as that of the public expenditure were not questions of aristocracy or democracy, nor questions of Conservatism or Radicalism; they were questions of the obvious interests of our country, and of humanity at large. He hoped the House and the nation would sustain the Government in every effort they might make to restore our foreign relations to a state of tranquillity and safety, so that we might turn our attention again to that from which we had been diverted for the last five years—viz., the process of reducing the expenditure, in order, if possible, to render England a country which all Englishmen should prefer, rather than one from which they had incessant inducements to emigrate to every other part of the globe.

On the 17th of August, 1859, a *soirée* was given at Rochdale to Mr. Cobden, who had now returned from America. The member for Rochdale gave his reasons for not joining the Palmerston Government. Mr. Bright passed a high eulogium upon his friend, and then said, 'Our people have been patient in suffering, they have been heroic in their labours and in their struggles; and I count the ambition to be in public life an ambition of a low and worthless kind if it be not the ambition to devote every faculty we possess to the true interests and permanent welfare and real elevation of the great and noble people which we go to Parliament to represent.' On the evening following, both members addressed a great mass meeting, dealing chiefly with the Reform question.

At Huddersfield, on the 9th of September ensuing, a banquet was given by the Liberals of that borough to celebrate the return to Parliament of Mr. E. A. Leatham, Mr. Bright's brother-in-law. Mr. Bright reviewed the course of recent legislation, and expressed his disappointment over the many wasted sessions which he had witnessed. He was so distressed and so weary—sometimes so disgusted and so hopeless—that he felt a strong inclination to retire from Parliament. All that had been done of late years was to vote with listless apathy millions of money for which the people had toiled. On the 1st of December, Mr. Bright attended a *soirée* given by the Liverpool Financial Reform Association, in the Philharmonic Hall. In the course of a long and animated address, the hon. gentleman said: 'I ask that the Parliament may be made the real representative of the property, the industry, and the intelligence of the nation,—that we may be delivered, if possible, from chaotic legislation, from reckless expenditure, and from taxation oppressive, unequal, and unjust. The monopolists of power reject this demand with

scorn. The day will come when it will be made in a louder voice than mine—when this question will be grasped by a ruder hand than mine; and when it is so made, as was the case in 1832, that for which reason and justice now plead in vain, will be surrendered amid terror and humiliation.'

At a Reform Conference held at the Guildhall Coffee House, London, on the 7th of December, in this same year, a resolution was unanimously passed thanking Mr. Bright for his labours in connection with Parliamentary Reform, and highly approving of his bill upon the subject. A second resolution demanded a large extension of the suffrage, redistribution, an assimilation of the electoral laws of England, Scotland, and Ireland, the repeal of the Septennial Act, and the Ballot. Mr. Bright said that, in the event of the failure of the Government, he would be prepared to introduce his own bill, which was now in so perfect a state that it could be brought in any night.

But although everything promised well at this juncture for the cause of Reform, the hopes built upon an early settlement of the question were doomed to be frustrated by a variety of events. When at length Reform could no longer be postponed, the measure, though largely moulded by Mr. Bright and his friends, was initiated by that party which, from the passing of the Act of 1832, had resolutely set itself against a liberal extension of the franchise.

THE

LIFE AND SPEECHES

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN BRIGHT, M. P.

LIFE

OF

THE RIGHT HON.

JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.

CHAPTER I.

THE FRENCH TREATY AND FOREIGN QUESTIONS.

Foreign Questions.—The Emperor Napoleon and the Anglo-French Treaty.—Effect of Mr. Bright's Speech.—Mr. Cobden's Negotiations.—The Treaty signed.—Mr. Gladstone's Budget of 1860.—Details of the French Treaty.—Tribute to Mr. Cobden.—Debates upon the Budget and the Treaty.—Mr. Bright defends the Government Scheme.—The Treaty approved.—Mr. Bright on the Policy of the French Emperor.—The Annexation of Savoy.—Mr. Bright's attitude on this question.—England and China.—Debate on the War.—Mr. Bright on Government Policy.—He severely condemns the Wars with China.—Financial Affairs of India.—Foreign Invasion Panic in 1860.—Increased Fortifications.—Powerful Speech by Mr. Bright.—The Disturbances in Syria.—Mr. Bright on the Support of Turkey.—Mazzini and Mr. Stansfeld.—Mr. Bright defends the Member for Halifax.—Scene between Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Bright.

Between the years 1860 and 1864, inclusive, several important questions affecting our foreign policy were discussed in Parliament; and in the debates which arose in the Lower House Mr. Bright took a conspicuous part. Foremost amongst these questions was the negotiation of the French Treaty. Mr. Bright, who was in perfect accord with Mr. Cobden both as regards the reduction of our national expenditure and the advantages which must accrue from the conclusion of an Anglo-French Treaty, did much by the speech which he delivered in July, 1859, on the financial policy of the Derby Government, to hasten the work afterwards successfully completed by Mr. Cobden. As we have seen, he expressed his belief that the thirty-six millions of Frenchmen engaged in the honest occupations of their country, were as anxious for perpetual peace with England as the most intelligent and Christian English-

man could be for a perpetual peace with France. The Emperor himself was, also, equally anxious to remain at peace with this country. There were great restrictions on the commerce between the two countries, which interfered with that free intercourse that should subsist between them, and these ought not to be allowed to remain; and he (Mr. Bright) strongly counselled the abolition of such restrictions.

The great difficulty was, that the French Emperor could not cope with the monopolists of his own country. If he could offer to his nation thirty millions of the English people as customers, that would give him an irresistible power to make changes in the French tariff which would be as advantageous to England as they would be to France. Mr. Bright believed that if that were honestly done—done without any diplomatic finesse, and without obstacles or conditions being attached to it which would make its acceptance impossible—it would bring about a state of things which history would pronounce to be glorious.

This speech was read by M. Michel Chevalier, the great French economist, who wrote to Mr. Cobden urging him to come to Paris in the belief that the Emperor would be willing to negotiate a commercial treaty with England. Mr. Cobden, at the close of the session, went to Paris, had several conversations with his friend M. Michel Chevalier, and was speedily engaged in personal communications with the Emperor, who showed equal intelligence and honesty on this question. M. Rouher, the French Minister, was enabled to commence negotiations, and through several months they went on, interfered with by many obstacles, but by no obstacles in France so great —as Mr. Bright said upon a subsequent occasion—as by some of those which came from this country. But finally the Treaty was signed, and Mr. Cobden at length saw achieved the second great triumph of his life.

On the 10th of February, 1860, Mr. Gladstone introduced his Budget, embodying the provisions of the French Treaty. In the outset, the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to the circumstances which made the present a memorable year in British finance—the relief of £2,146,000 from payment of interest on the National Debt; the lessening of war duties on tea and sugar; the expiry of the period for which the income-tax was voted, and the new commercial treaty with France. The charges for the ensuing year he estimated at £70,000,000, and the income at £60,700,000; the deficiency to be made up partly by a renewal of the tea and sugar duties as they now stood for

fifteen months, and partly through the operations of the new French Treaty, which he recommended the House to adopt. 'France,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'engaged to reduce the duties on English coal and coke, flax, and pig-iron, in 1860. On the 1st of October, 1861, France would reduce duties and take away prohibitions on British productions mentioned, so that there should not be an *ad valorem* duty of over 30 per cent. There was a provision that the maximum of 30 per cent. should, after a lapse of three years, be reduced to a maximum of 25 per cent. England engaged, with a limited power of exception, to abolish immediately and totally all duties on manufactured goods; to reduce the duty on brandy from 15*s.* to 8*s.* 2*d.*; on wine from 5*s.* 10*d.* to 3*s.*; with power reserved to increase the duty on wine, if we raised our duty on spirits. England engaged to charge upon French articles subject to excise the same duties which the manufacturer would be put to in consequence of the changes. The Treaty was to be in force for ten years.'

Mr. Gladstone then paid a well-merited tribute to Mr. Cobden. He said that he could not help expressing his obligation to him for the labour he had, at no small personal sacrifice, bestowed upon a measure which Mr. Cobden, not the least among the apostles of Free Trade, believed to be one of the greatest triumphs of Free Trade ever accomplished. 'It is a great privilege for any man who, having, fifteen years ago, rendered to his country one important and signal service, now enjoys the singular good fortune of having it in his power—undecorated, bearing no mark of rank or title from his Sovereign, or from the people—to perform another signal service in the same cause for the benefit of, I hope, a not ungrateful country.'

Mr. Disraeli moved an amendment to the effect that the House should not go into committee on the Customs Act until it should have considered and assented to the French Treaty; but this was rejected by 293 to 230. On the 21st, however, another debate upon the Budget was raised on Mr. Ducane's motion, 'That this House, recognizing the necessity of providing for the increased expenditure of the coming financial year, is of opinion that it is not expedient to add to the existing deficiency by diminishing the ordinary Revenue, and is not prepared to disappoint the just expectations of the country by re-imposing the income-tax at an unnecessarily high rate.'

Mr. Bright spoke upon both these motions. Referring to Mr. Disraeli's resolution, he said he could not discern its real object or purpose. If he sat on the other side of the House, instead of carping at the Treaty and making it the stalking-

horse of party, he would attack it in a manly way. He was of opinion that the Government had taken the right course; but say that their policy was bad, the Treaty bad, and the Budget bad; let the course taken be a straightforward one; let an explicit resolution be brought forward, and the question discussed upon its merits.

In the debate on Mr. Ducane's motion, Mr. Bright expressed at length his views upon the Treaty and the Budget generally. Rising after Sir F. Baring, whose speech was of a somewhat pessimist character, he said that that speech came from a mind which clung very much to the past, and entertained doubts with regard to the future. Every part of it held up some hobgoblin to prevent them from pursuing the course which since 1842 had proved most wise. The country approved the Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposals, and the motion, which was a fair one, went to defeat the whole scheme, to reject the Budget and the Treaty, and to overthrow the Government. The result of this would be a new budget, indirect taxes, and at the same time an estrangement from France, which he thought would be very unfortunate.

Mr. Bright then happily illustrated his opinion of the Treaty by this reference to the writings of Mr. Disraeli :—

'In one of the many books which the right hon. gentleman has written, partly for instruction and perhaps more for the amusement of his countrymen, he described the mode of living of an English nobleman of great wealth in Paris. He says: "Lord Monmouth's dinners at Paris were celebrated. It was generally agreed that they had no rival. Yet there were others who had as skilful cooks; others who for equal purposes were as profuse in their expenditure. What was the secret of his success? His lordship's plates were always hot (*a laugh*); whereas in Paris, in the best-appointed houses, and at dinners which for costly materials and admirable art in preparation cannot be surpassed, the effect is considerably lessened by the fact that every person at dinner is served with a cold plate. The reason of a custom, or rather a necessity, which one would think a nation so celebrated for their gastronomic tastes would better regulate, is, that the French porcelain is so inferior that it cannot endure the ordinary heat for dinner." Now the right hon. gentleman, with an instinct which we cannot too much admire, breaks out into something like an exclamation. He says: "Now if we only had that commercial treaty with France which has been so often on the point of completion, and the fabrics of our unrivalled potteries were given in exchange for the capital wines, the dinners of both nations would be improved; England would gain a delightful beverage, and the French (for the first time in their lives) would dine off hot plates." (*Laughter.*) And he concludes with an expression which I recommend to his devoted followers: "An unanswerable instance of the advantages of commercial reciprocity!"' (*Great laughter.*)

It was objected to the Treaty, Mr. Bright continued, that the advantage was all on the side of France; but he contended that, on the face of the Treaty, concession for concession, the French gave to us at least five times as much as we gave to them; and

that when the Treaty came into force, our trade with France, which was now almost *nil*, would rank her with some of our best customers. A phantom of an argument had been raised on the subject of coal, but this question, with regard to the navy of France, was a mere bagatelle. The whole of the coal required by the French navy was only 150,000 tons. He made all allowances for the Emperor of the French on the ground that he had to deal with an obstinate Protectionist party, there being 'Chowlers' in France as well as in England. But the Treaty, he observed, was but a part of the scheme of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who proposed to reduce and simplify the Tariff, and to abolish the hated excise upon paper; and he asked the opponents of the Budget whether 1*d.* or 2*d.* or 3*d.* in the pound income-tax was too much to pay for the great good which the country would receive from it. The scheme carried out the policy of Sir Robert Peel; the effects of that policy had been seen and felt, and no one now denied that it was a wise one.

But while thus defending the Treaty, the Budget, and the relaxations of the Tariff, Mr. Bright said he was not unmindful of one great blot in the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was the frightful, the scandalous expenditure. He ridiculed the notion that there was any ground for apprehension of evil designs by France, and asked why it was, with professions of perfect amity on our part, and a commercial treaty, there should be so vast an increase in our estimates. It was a wonderful inconsistency, or a great and fatal hypocrisy, and somebody must be guilty of an immorality, the darkness of which he wanted words to describe. There was no rock on which so many dynasties had foundered as the rock of reckless and needless expenditure. Concluding by speaking of Mr. Gladstone's scheme as a whole, Mr. Bright said, 'It extends the hand of friendship, not to a government only, but to a great nation across the Channel. Amid the much darkness of Europe, it is a spot of light, and opens to humanity a prospect

"Bright as the breaking East, as midday glorious."

I think it a great measure of justice to England, a great measure of friendship to France; and I am convinced that, acting and working through the means of these two great nations, it will be found hereafter to be a great measure of mercy to mankind.'

In the end, on Mr. Ducane's motion, the Government had a majority of 116, in a House of 562 members. Mr. Gladstone's propositions, with the French Treaty, were afterwards adopted, and an address to the Crown was carried approving the Treaty.

About this time Mr. Bright attended the annual meeting of the Lancashire Reformers' Union held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. He again alluded to the groundless fears of the French, observing that France was made the raw-head and bloody bones of 1793, turning the people from the consideration of their own affairs. We must be careful that it had no such effect in our day. But when he saw measures being taken—happily frustrated just now—which were the exact counterpart of the policy of 1793, he wished for a moment to dwell on this point. As to the steps by which Louis Napoleon became ruler of France, no one had now a right to quarrel with him on that score, for he was congratulated by the then Foreign Minister, now Prime Minister of this country, almost immediately after; and when he came to England he was received with every demonstration of amity by the Sovereign, and of enthusiasm by the people.

Having sketched the foreign policy of the Emperor of the French, and shown where it had been in accord with that of England, Mr. Bright added: 'I say that Louis Napoleon, judging by what appears in the papers, and what one knows beside, has done all he can to accommodate his policy to that of England: whether it be in Italy—where you sympathise with freedom, or in the distant empire of China—where you have no right as a Power to be carrying on war,—whether in the right in Europe or in the wrong in China, you find the policy of the French Government most anxious to square itself with the policy of England.

'And now, after all these alarms, after all these sulphurous leading articles, after all those specimens of wretched oratory poured out by speakers at rifle meetings, after a succession of stimulating letters from the Secretary at War, and hints that you don't know what that man over the water is going to do;—after all those things, the man over the water is receiving one of your citizens (Mr. Cobden)—discussing the great questions of commerce and peace—not matters about which your diplomatists generally concern themselves—receiving information, considering what would be advantageous to the great nation over which he rules, what would be advantageous to the world of which France and England form so great a part; and you find him propounding, in a letter which deserves to be written in letters of gold, a new commercial policy for France. I venture to say that for centuries to come, if the policy marked out be adopted, a blessed renown will be attached to the name of the third Napoleon which will eclipse all that sanguinary glory

which encircles the name of the first of the dynasty.' At the mention of Mr. Cobden's name in this speech, the whole assembly rose, and cheered enthusiastically.

The annexation of Savoy was a question of great interest in the session of 1860, and it was one upon which Mr. Bright expressed himself very emphatically. On the 2nd of March Sir Robert Peel asked the Government for certain explanations respecting the policy of the Emperor of the French. Before Lord John Russell gave them, Mr. Bright interposed, and said, 'I don't want the Government to give the slightest countenance to this transfer, nor do I want them, on the other hand, to give the slightest opposition to it. The opposition, if you give it, must be futile; you cannot prevent the transference of Savoy, but you may, if you like, embroil Europe, and bring England into collision with France. I say, Perish Savoy—though Savoy, I believe, will not perish or even suffer—rather than that we, the representatives of the people of England, should involve the Government of this country with the people and the Government of France in a matter in which we have really no interest whatever.' He begged the House, in the name of common sense and in the interests of England, to regard this question calmly and dispassionately. 'If these two kingdoms (France and Sardinia) have agreed on the transfer, and the people of Savoy themselves are favourable to it, I say it is contrary to the interests of England, and to the honour of the English Government, to pretend to interpose against a transaction which, though I would never have recommended or promoted it, is yet, I am sure, not worth the imposition of a single tax on Englishmen, or the expenditure of a single drop of blood for one moment to prevent it.'

Mr. Bright was subjected to great abuse in some quarters for the attitude he took upon this matter, although it was one which subsequent events fully justified. The question came up many times in the course of the session, and on the 2nd of March Lord John Russell detailed the policy of the English Government in connection therewith. At a later date in the same month, viz., the 26th, Mr. Horsman initiated a discussion upon the subject by making a severe attack upon the French Emperor and the policy of our own Ministers. Lord John Russell defended the Government, and was followed by Mr. Bright, who said that the members who had so frequently introduced this question to the House had entirely avoided what was the most important point, viz., the clear and direct interest the House and the country had in the matter

under discussion. He contended for the interests of England. There was one reason why England should rather be glad of the transfer of Savoy to France. Sardinia agreed to the transfer as a compensation to France; and it was perhaps better that the score should be settled in this manner than that for the future Sardinia should consider herself greatly indebted to France, and bound up in a perpetual political alliance with that country. Discussing the position of Austria, Mr. Bright asked whether the gentleman opposite thought that the Austrian Government would join in a quarrel about Savoy when they had not a word to say when Austria was dismembered? As to Russia, was there any man idiot enough to suppose that the Russian Government would step out of its tranquil path to join us upon a miserable question like this, remembering the course we took with regard to Russia seven years ago? Prussia, too, though for many reasons disposed to side with England, had no interest in this question, and did not desire to take any steps with us.

Coming then to England, who amongst us was interested in this matter? There was a portion of the press which vituperated everything connected with the French people and the French Government; and he (Mr. Bright) suspected it was with the object of supporting a family who, when in power, were not able to maintain themselves in France, and who had no claim on the strength or influence of England to replace them in the position they had lost. He did not believe that the House was alarmed about the matter. Europe had given the question up, and it seemed that England had also given it up. The House of Commons was willing to give it up, and the only persons who were in a state of trepidation were the hon. and learned member for Bridgwater (Mr. Kinglake), the right hon. member for Stroud (Mr. Horsman), and one or two others. If Mr. Horsman wanted to make war on the Treasury Bench, he should not begin his assaults when the Treasury Bench was in the right. 'With regard to the main question at issue,' continued Mr. Bright, 'I am against the House putting itself in the humiliating position which it is invited to take up, and barking where it does not intend to bite, and making itself, not the guardian of the affairs of Europe, for that would be foolish and impossible, but making itself the common scold of all Europe. The noble lord will truckle to no Power in Europe, I am sure; but let him so conduct the foreign policy of this country that all the nations of Europe shall say, what, I believe, they have not heretofore said, that England is a Power regarding her own

great interests mainly, not interfering in Europe when it can be avoided, and, when interfering, doing so, not for the sake of exalting one Power and degrading another, but in favour of those great principles of justice and moderation which are necessary in the transactions of the great Powers if the peace of Europe is to be preserved.'

It is scarcely necessary to add that the cession of Savoy and Nice to France was completed during the year, the provinces themselves voting by an enormous majority in favour of annexation.

The relations between England and China occupied the attention of Parliament during the session of 1860; and on the 16th of March, when the Government proposed to take a vote of credit on account of the China war, Sir De Lacy Evans proposed the following amendment: 'That humbly participating in the wish of Her Majesty, expressed in her most gracious speech on the opening of this session of Parliament—namely, that she will be gratified if the prompt acquiescence of the Emperor of China in the moderate demands which have been made upon him by the allies shall obviate the necessity for the employment of force—this House is of opinion that the moderation of policy thus indicated on the part of Her Majesty and that of her ally the Emperor of the French, will best contribute to diminish expenditure, avert complications, and to promote commerce, the interests of justice, and the establishment of peace.' Lord John Russell, in reply, said that no one could regret more than he did the necessity for this expedition; but the persons and property of our trades must be secured, and he thought that our Minister in China should have the power not only of going to but of residing at the capital. He considered that we were also entitled to an indemnity.

Mr. Bright expressed his disappointment at Lord John Russell's statements. On occasions of this nature, it was the duty of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to be a little more explicit. The hon. member then traced the progress of the transactions in China from the war which was commenced, he affirmed, by the indiscretion of Sir J. Bowring; and after blaming the stipulations of the last treaty, he contended that, in the proceedings for the ratification of that treaty, we were as much in the wrong as we were at Canton, under the management of Sir J. Bowring. He denied that the Chinese were open to the charge of treachery; he insisted that the collision at the mouth of the Peiho was attributable to the folly and imbecility of our own Minister and the indiscretion of the Admiral; and he censured

the Government for allowing a person so utterly unfit to conduct the negotiations as Mr. Bruce to continue to be our Minister in China. He could see no advantage to this country in requiring that our Minister should reside at Pekin, which would inflict a grievous insult upon the Emperor of China, and be an ungenerous act on our part.

Further, Mr. Bright warned the Government against a partnership with another power, and against making demands upon the Government of China which, being based only upon a disaster occasioned by the folly of our own Minister, we ought not in the sight of God or man to make. 'Looking back upon our transactions with China during the last few years, I believe nothing more vicious can be found in our history; no page of our annals is more full of humiliation, because full of crime, than that on which is recorded our transactions with China; and because I feel this—because I wish the Government to live and prosper—because I wish this House to stand in honour before the country—because I wish the country to hold a position of repute and morality before the world, therefore it is I warn the Government and this House against proceeding with a policy which no man here can say in his conscience is not a policy conducted in defiance of the laws of Heaven, and those principles of justice without which human society itself cannot be held together.'

No division was taken on the motion, but in the course of the evening the House voted in Committee of Supply a sum of £850,000 on account of the intended expedition. The whole war involved an expenditure of several millions.

The affairs of China were also fully discussed in the session of 1864, when Mr. Cobden made a powerful attack upon the policy of the Government. In accordance with the doctrines which he had always consistently maintained in regard to foreign policy, the member for Rochdale strongly objected to the intervention of England in the civil war between the Imperialists and the Taepings. On the 31st of May, therefore, Mr. Cobden moved a resolution declaring that the policy of non-intervention by force of arms in the internal political affairs of foreign countries, which we professed to observe in our relations with the states of Europe and America, should be observed in our intercourse with the empire of China. The hon. member said that China was the only foreign country where we had systematically endeavored to force a trade by violence and war; and, curiously enough, it was the only country which formed an exception to the general progress that was apparent everywhere else. In

about twenty years we had had three wars with China, the object of which was to open up, as it was called, trade with that country; but the result had been that, whenever there was a war, our merchants, stimulated by anticipations of extended markets, sent out large quantities of produce, and reaped nothing but disappointment, collapse, and reaction. He recommended the appointment, early in the following session, of a Select Committee to inquire into our commercial relations with China and Japan.

Lord Palmerston, in reply, said that the object of England in establishing herself at the Treaty ports was not to obtain territory. All she wanted was a basis for her commerce, and this could not be obtained as long as there were hordes of revolutionists congregated in their neighbourhood. The policy which England had pursued had been eminently successful; and as we had now entered into friendly relations with the central Government of China, he was persuaded that those relations were not likely to be shaken, and that our interests in China would every year increase.

Mr. Bright remarked that, looking back over the past thirty years, there was, perhaps, no portion of our annals of which we ought to be less proud than of those connected with our relations with China. The Government of Lord Palmerston had brought everything Chinese into such inextricable confusion that it was hardly worth while to make any attempt to get them out of it. From the debate of that evening he came to the conclusion that with two or three exceptions only, the House universally condemned the policy that had been pursued. Lord Palmerston had attempted to persuade the House that the trade with China—the most miserable trade in the world when compared with the magnitude of the population—was of so great importance to the working classes of this country, that it was worth while to indulge in the policy he had carried on, and to encounter the great expenses which had been incurred. Now he (Mr. Bright) ventured to say that our trade with China—speaking of our exports from England to China for many years back—he believed for thirty years—had not left one single farthing of profit, if we paid out of it the cost of the wars, of the intermeddling, and of the military and naval forces now permanently established there. 'It is a monstrous folly,' said Mr. Bright, 'that the population of this country, so hard toiling and so suffering in comparison with us who are here, as millions of them are, should be taxed year after year to carry on a policy which for thirty years has covered us with

discredit, and has wholly failed; and that this policy should be carried on only to please a curious crotchet which the noble lord at the head of the Government has taken upon it—a crotchet which is not participated in, I believe, by a single member of his Cabinet, which this House is willing wholly to repudiate, and which I believe, in every society in England where the question is discussed receives the same condemnation which it has received in Parliament to-night.' He hoped that the noble lord would now, when he saw the entire failure of his plans and prophecies, for once come to the conclusion that he was not infallible, and allow good sense and wisdom, rather than violent prejudices to sway his policy for the future.

Having attained his object by the discussion upon his motion, Mr. Cobden now withdrew it.

On the financial affairs of India, and the recall of Sir Charles Trevelyan, Mr. Bright had something to say in the session of 1860. It appears that Mr. James Wilson, having been appointed financial member of the Legislative Council of India, had developed a scheme of retrenchment and taxation, which he propounded in the Council at Calcutta, and which was generally received with approval both in India and England. Sir C. Trevelyan, however, the new Governor of Madras, took an opposite view, regarding Mr. Wilson's projects as very injurious, if not impracticable. The Governor's hostility became so marked that it threatened to create great difficulties, and seriously to impede the success of the projected financial reform. The Home Government were accordingly driven to order the immediate recall of the Governor. On the 11th of May, Mr. Danby Seymour raised a debate in the House of Commons upon Sir C. Trevelyan's recall by a series of questions. The Indian Secretary, Sir C. Wood, said that without discussing Sir. C. Trevelyan's Minute—which he admitted to be a most excellent and able document—the Government could not pass over his very improper act in publishing it. It was an act of insubordination—an act subversive of all authority—the mutiny of one Governor against another.

Mr. Bright followed, observing that the question was one of a somewhat painful character, and he quite understood the difficulty in which Sir C. Wood was placed. He had considered the Budget of Mr. Wilson, and did not deny its ability, but the fault he found with it was that it proposed to balance income and expenditure by proposing new taxes. Sir C. Trevelyan was strongly of opinion that Mr. Wilson's scheme was not a wise one for his Government, and that it was not necessary to

raise new taxes, but that the balance might be effected by reducing expenditure; and he wrote a most able Minute, which showed him to be more of a statesman than the authors of the Calcutta scheme. But the question was as to the course taken by him in publishing his Minute. This course was most unusual, and contrary to official etiquette, and he could not join Mr. Seymour in condemning Sir C. Wood. Mr. Bright argued, nevertheless, that this was a case which proved to the House —and ought to prove to the gentlemen on the Treasury Bench —that, as he had frequently insisted, it would be far better to have five or six separate Governments in India, and that the laws to be passed should be passed by each Government for each Presidency, with reference to its own condition and its own wants. As to the withdrawal of Sir C. Trevelyan from Madras, it would be deeply regretted: though not a judicious subordinate, he had proved himself a wise Governor, and he (Mr. Bright) hoped Sir C. Wood would study his Minute with care, as it would enable him to modify and greatly improve the project of legislation proposed at Calcutta.

Several other members having spoken, and Lord Palmerston having concurred in the general tribute to Sir C. Trevelyan, the discussion terminated.

A very important question, bearing upon foreign policy, arose in the session of 1860 in connection with the fortifications and works of this country. On the 23rd of July Lord Palmerston explained the intentions of the Government with respect to the recommendations of the National Defence Commission for fortifying the dockyards, and establishing a central depôt for arms and stores. He proposed that a vote be taken in the meantime for £2,000,000, to be charged on the Consolidated Fund, and raised by annuities for a term not exceeding thirty years. The total outlay, it was expected, would be eleven or twelve millions. Mr. Bright said that during his seventeen years' experience in that House he had never known an instance of a question of such magnitude and importance brought before it without notice, and of such a resolution being proposed for adoption on the same evening. In all probability the proposition would involve an expenditure of twice £12,000,000; and he protested against being entrapped or cajoled into such a resolution.

But a large majority in the House, as well as a large party in the country, were at this time filled with fears of a possible foreign aggression. France, it was said, had a far greater force under arms than she required for the purpose of defence;

and she was not strengthening herself upon land alone. The utmost exertions were being made to create a navy almost equal to our own, which could not be required for the defence of France, but which furnished the means of transporting in a few hours a large military force to our shores. Such were the arguments which led to the foreign invasion panic in this country, and to the proposed enormous expenditure upon our fortifications.

The debate upon Lord Palmerston's resolution was adjourned, and on its being resumed on the 2nd of August, Mr. Lindsay moved the following amendment: 'That, as the main defence of Great Britain against aggression depends on an efficient navy, it is not now expedient to enter into a large expenditure on permanent land fortifications.'

The chief feature in the debate which ensued was a long and remarkable speech by Mr. Bright. This address, which occupies some twenty-eight columns of *Hansard*, is amongst the most powerful and able of his Parliamentary orations. Certainly, on the question of public expenditure and our relations with France, he has never spoken more eloquently. Mr. Bright began by saying that he had intended to move an amendment himself to Lord Palmerston's resolution, but as Mr. Lindsay had preceded him with an amendment having the same effect, he would not now move his own amendment, but address the House upon that already before it. Addressing himself next to the main subject, he said the House would deceive itself if it supposed that the estimate of the Government as to the cost of these works could be relied upon. Whenever the Government undertook any work, the estimate was never adhered to,—the expenditure was doubled before the work was completed; and he had no doubt that, if the House voted the carrying out of these works to completion, the expenditure would be at least £20,000,000. Millions more would be involved; there must be an increase of the standing army, and the works would be useless without soldiers to man them. He wanted to know by whom this expenditure was urged; was it by an united Cabinet? As to the military authorities, he remarked: 'I have looked into their recommendations, and I confess I am amazed at the absolute stupidity—(*laughter*)—yes, stupidity; if you want a word less offensive, I would say the absolute lunacy—(*laughter*)—of the military authorities in regard to this question.' Sir Robert Peel had said in 1850 that if you adopt the opinions of military men on all points of national security, you would overwhelm the country with taxes in time of peace.

Mr. Bright went on to consider the various means of defence which had been suggested, and said he was not one of those who thought that, in considering what means of defence we had, it might not be very advantageous to have a large volunteer force instead of an enormous standing army. Switzerland and the United States had a volunteer force for their defence. He next quoted the opinions of Mr. Valentine Baker, Colonel Jebb, Sir Robert Gardiner, and Lieut.-Gen. Kennedy, who had written upon this subject of fortifications. Some of them proposed systems more economical than that of the Government; and one believed that £20,000,000 would not be sufficient for additional fortifications, while for the pay of a numerically adequate army and navy, an annual increase of £4,000,000 upon the present estimates was necessary. There was a good deal before us if we embarked in this undertaking. A writer in the *United Service Magazine* showed how lamentably deficient we were as regarded the navy, while an eminent French military critic, M. Brialmont, said that England required an 'augmentation of the permanent army, and the creation of a grand strategical pivot in the south and in the neighbourhood of London.'

The hon. gentleman then examined the report which had been presented to the House, describing it as incoherent, illogical, and absurd. He believed that if the follies and superstitions of the Foreign Office could be got rid of, we might save three-fourths of our military expenditure, and that whatever was necessary for internal defence might be had at little expense from the volunteers. Reviewing the opinions and suggestions of the military authorities upon this question, accompanying the survey by a sarcastic running commentary, he asked the Committee whether there was any other thing they were prepared to undertake upon such counsel, than which nothing, he declared, could be more confused. There was an extraordinary spirit abroad in this matter.

'It is precisely the same sort of delusion as that of a person who always imagines he is going to be poisoned. I know a case where a gentleman imagines that at any hotel he enters they want to give him bread that is poisoned. One day he went to that beautiful hotel at Derby. "Did you not observe," said he, "the bread they gave me?" "No." "What! did you not observe it was poisoned?" "No." "Why, wherever I go I find the bread they give me is always poisoned." So it is with the gentlemen who argue this question. The ships and the men are everywhere with them, ready to come over upon us, though nobody can ever find them in the condition they are described to be in. It is no use to argue with them. The idea has got into their heads, just as it got into the head of that unfortunate lunatic; and we find ourselves just as unable to eradicate it in the one case as in the other.'

Mr. Bright proceeded to argue that the representations as

to the naval augmentations and coast fortifications in France were gross exaggerations; but they acted upon the people, and if the people believed them, he charged this to the contemptible cowardice of the Cabinet Ministers of this country. He arraigned in severe terms the policy of the present Administration towards France, characterizing it as grossly inconsistent, and in one particular insulting at once to the people of England and of France. The Emperor of the French had made efforts to meet the wishes of the English Government, and we should act as if we thought him sincere and amicable towards this country. But the speech of Lord Palmerston the other night in bringing forward this resolution was calculated to encourage the panic in England, and to create excitement and distrust in France.

Demanding to know when the limit of our enormous expenditure was to be reached, Mr. Bright continued: 'How has this change come about? It all came about since the year 1853, when the flood-gates of passion were opened; and from that time to the present the Exchequer has been open, and every man, it appears, has been allowed to put his hand into it, and spend just as much money as he likes. Up to that time it was boasted that the reign of Queen Victoria was to be a reign of peace. We were told that

> "No war or battle's sound
> Was heard the world around;
> The idle spear and shield were high up hung."

But since then the Court seems to have its chief occupation in connection with military affairs;—reviews in Hyde Park, reviews at Aldershot, shooting matches on Wimbledon Common,—all these are occupations which for a long time have been foreign to the English Court, and for which I believe in my conscience there is not a particle of justification at the moment at which I am speaking. The people are stimulated to arm, the Cabinet is constantly devising new modes of expenditure, and all this appears to be based on the ignorance of the people, the clamours of the services, and the want of courage in the Cabinet to speak the real truth to the nation.'

Mr. Bright said that a great Minister of Queen Elizabeth once declared that England would never be undone except by a Parliament; and he feared that what was now occurring was tending to that which we understood by the undoing of a nation. The coming census of the United States was expected to show a population of 32,000,000 souls, or more than the next census

of the United Kingdom would show; yet the expenses of the whole Government of the United States would not amount to more than £12,000,000 sterling. Now he asked whether it was possible that we could continue to raise from the people of this country £60,000,000 of taxes in excess of what an equal population was called to pay for its Government and its policy in the United States. Mr. Bright then closed with this stirring and vigorous peroration.—

'France may be our enemy. I do not believe she is. There may be enemies abroad; but I can find nobody who can point them out. I can, however, point out an enemy at home, and that is this insane and wicked policy, which requires that you should abstract from the labour and the industry of the people of England this enormous, incredible, and ruinous sum from year to year. What is the result in every other country? If somebody had told the Minister of Louis XIV. that his extravagance would end in disaster to France, he would have answered them, as I shall be answered, "The country is rich enough,—the glory of France is worth more than your sordid considerations of pounds, shillings, and pence. France must keep a great position in Europe —there is no burden which France will not easily by its elasticity raise itself under and support." But do we not know that in another generation his family became exiles; the aristocracy of his country was overthrown: another branch of his family has been exiled, and the kingdom which he did so much to ruin has been subjected to sixty years of anarchy and recurring revolution! This is the story history tells of other countries as well as of France; and if we pursue the same course, I fear the history which will be written in the future of our time will be exactly like that which had been written of France and of other countries. You will have an exiled royal family, you will have an overthrown aristocracy, and you will have a period of recurring revolution; and there is no path so straight, so downward, so slippery, so easily travelled to all these misfortunes, as the path which we are now following, year after year, adding to these enormous expenses, until the time will come when there will be some change throughout the country, when men will open their eyes, will ask who has deceived them, defrauded them, pillaged them. And then you will have to pay the penalty which all men in the upper classes of society in every country have had to pay when they have not maintained the rights of the great body of the people in this particular, and when they have not performed the duties which devolved upon them as the governing classes of the country. It is because I hate this policy—because I condemn this expenditure—because I see that it will lead to more expenditure, and to the wider prevalence of this policy, that I oppose with all my heart the resolution of the noble lord; and in doing that, I feel the strongest conviction in my conscience that I am doing my duty, not less to the people of whom I am one, than to the monarchy under which I live.'

The writer might as well have appealed to a wall of adamant. The House was panic-stricken, and the amendment was negatived by the large majority of 268 to 39. Another amendment moved by the hon. gentleman himself only obtained thirty-seven votes, and the original resolution was agreed to. A bill was subsequently brought in to give effect to the resolution, and the second reading was carried by 141 to 32. The measure afterwards passed through both Houses.

Mr. Bright took the opportunity during the session of 1860 of expressing his views on the question of English support of Turkey, in a debate which arose in connection with the disturbances in Syria. Massacres of Christians had taken place, and Turkey was apparently too weak to secure the safety of the Christian population. While admitting that no intervention within our memory could be so well excused as that undertaken by England in regard to affairs in Syria, Mr. Bright said he rose to protest against the policy of maintaining the integrity of the Turkish Empire, and of supporting the Sultan's Government. According to Lord John Russell's own statement, this Power was doomed to extinction, and no human aid could avert its decay. After re-establishing the power and dignity of the Porte, and securing the integrity of the Turkish Empire by a treaty of the various Powers of Europe, we found that country, seven years after the commencement of the Crimean war, in a worse condition of anarchy than it was before we meddled with it. There was much talk of improvement, but it was only to bolster up the stock markets. No improvement was made, and in Syria the authorities of the Sultan did not lift a hand to stay the shedding of the blood of our fellow-creatures, and, to some extent, our co-religionists. What was to be the end of it?

After further dwelling upon the helplessness of Turkey, Mr. Bright said: 'The question of Constantinople, which is supposed to be the great political question, is surely not an insuperable difficulty. It cannot be said that heaven permitted a great city to grow up in a favoured spot to form continually a bone of contention between the nations of Europe, or that the statesmen who have settled so many questions cannot suggest what can be done with this. What I am myself most anxious for is that England should hold itself aloof from that policy—should, in point of fact, repudiate it altogether as a mistake, that the integrity of the Turkish Empire is to be maintained, and that, not this power, but the pretended power—the feebleness and the dignity of the Sultan—is to be supported; and that all this is to be done again at the expense of the taxes drawn from the English people, and of the blood of Englishmen squandered like water in the endeavour to do that which nature says is impossible, and that all experience tells us we must fail in if we ever attempt.'

Language almost precisely similar to this with regard to Turkey was used by many eminent English statesmen nearly twenty years later. Mr. Bright saw public opinion grow rapidly to-

wards his own views, in fact, when the crisis arose which resulted in the Russo-Turkish war.

In the session of 1864 Mr. Bright spoke again on a question relating to foreign politics, when he chivalrously defended Mr. Stansfeld—member for Halifax, and a Junior Lord of the Admiralty in Lord Palmerston's Government—from the aspersions cast upon him. It appears that at the trial in Paris of Greco and others for conspiring to assassinate the Emperor of the French, it was stated by the Procureur-Imperial in his speech, that a paper had been found in the possession of one of the accused persons, directing him to write for money to Mr. Flowers, at 35, Thurlow Square, Brompton, 'where,' 'the Procureur added, a member of the English Parliament resided, who, in 1855, had been appointed banker to the Tibaldi conspirators.' The matter was first referred to by Mr. Cox, the member for Finsbury, when Mr. Stansfeld warmly repudiated the statement made by the Procureur-Imperial. He said it was quite true that he lived at the address indicated, but he knew nothing whatever of the prisoner Greco. He had permitted M. Mazzini, under the name of Mr. Flowers, to have letters addressed to him at his house. He had been on intimate terms with M. Mazzini for the past eighteen years, and he was persuaded that no man had ever been more cruelly or wrongfully maligned than he was.

Mr. P. A. Taylor pointed out that it would have been absurd to expect that letters addressed to Mazzini in his own name would be delivered to him in London. Although Mr. Stansfeld, however, expressly affirmed that he had no knowledge of the nature of the correspondence which passed between Mazzini and his friends, Mr. Disraeli strongly attacked both the member for Halifax and the eminent Italian patriot.

On the 17th of March, when the House proposed to go into Committee of Supply, Sir Henry Stracey moved as an amendment, 'That the speech of the Procureur-Imperial on the trial of Greco, implicating a member of this House and of Her Majesty's Government in the plot for the assassination of our ally the Emperor of the French, deserves the serious consideration of this House.'

Mr. Stansfeld now repeated his denials, though he admitted having, in common with other English friends, allowed M. Mazzini to receive letters addressed to him at his house under the designation of M. Fiori, *Anglicé* Flowers. In the course of the debate which followed, Lord Palmerston said he regarded the explanation of Mr. Stansfeld as perfectly satisfactory.

Mr. Bright called upon the House, which had usually been fair in its judgments, not to discuss this matter in a spirit which was unfair and ungenerous to Mr. Stansfeld. He referred to members of the House who in the past had distinguished themselves as the friends of Polish, Hungarian, and Italian refugees; and if there was any man who would stand up and say he never felt a particle of sympathy for the refugees who had been driven to this country, he (Mr. Bright) said he despised him. M. Mazzini had a profound devotion to the principle of the unity and independence of Italy. He was a man of a powerful and fascinating character, and obtained over those with whom he associated a singular influence.

Mr. Bright then observed that Mr. Disraeli, in his early writings, had expressed opinions—it might be merely to excite a sensation amongst his readers—very much like those attributed to M. Mazzini.

Mr. Disraeli hereupon sprang up and said, 'There is not the slightest foundation for that statement. I give it the most unequivocal contradiction.' *

Resuming, Mr. Bright said, then doubtless those who quoted writings said to be the right hon. gentleman's were in error. He accepted Mr. Disraeli's statement freely, but he was not about to blame him. That kind of writing often came in youth from great enthusiasm and from an acquaintance with what at school they were taught to regard as the heroic deeds of ancient days. He (Mr. Bright) did not rise for the purpose of

* The opinions referred to by Mr. Bright were expressed in one of Lord Beaconsfield's early works, *The Revolutionary Epick*, in which occurred this passage:—

'Blest be the hand that dares to wave
The regicidal steel that shall redeem
A nation's sorrow with a tyrant's blood!'

In the edition of 1864, the author revised this passage so as to read as follows:—

'Dark Pharaoh's doom
Shall cool your chariot wheels, and hallowed be
The regicidal steel that shall redeem
A nation's woe.'

Other revolutionary passages were also toned down in meaning. It was claimed on behalf of Lord Beaconsfield that he could not be held responsible for the opinions put into the mouth of his characters; but this only makes his radical alteration of the important passages in question the more inexplicable. The noble lord said that his alterations were purely literary ones, but a comparison of the respective texts of 1834 and 1864 will show that this was not the case, and that there was really some ground for Mr. Bright's reference to *The Revolutionary Epick*.

saying a single syllable in defence of Mazzini. His observations were intended to explain, and in some degree to justify, the friendship that had existed between him and other eminent foreigners and the member for Halifax. After all that had been said, however,—remembering the official position of the member for Halifax, and admitting all that had been urged against him,—he would ask hon. gentlemen opposite whether the course they were taking was one worthy of a great party. He did not differ from them in their disgust and horror at the attempt on the life of the Emperor of France; but if he were as hungry as the hungriest person to place himself on the Treasury Bench, he would be ashamed to make his way to it over the character, the reputation, the happiness, and the future of the last-appointed and youngest member of the Government.

Sir H. Stracey's amendment was negatived by 171 to 161, but the subject was revived on the following evening by Lord Elcho; and as it appeared that a series of premeditated attacks was designed against the member for Halifax, in order to avoid embarrassing the Government, Mr. Stansfeld resigned his office. Lord Palmerston accepted the resignation, but not without considerable reluctance.

These various addresses by Mr. Bright on foreign questions demonstrate that while he was pre-eminently a statesman watchful and solicitous as regards purely British home interests, he had yet that breadth of view which truly grasps and assesses the important relations sustained by the British Empire towards continental nations.

CHAPTER II.

THE PAPER DUTIES.—REFORM.—CHURCH RATES, ETC.

Opposition to the Repeal of the Paper Duty.—The Bill rejected by the Lords.—A Constitutional Question.—Mr. Bright on the House of Lords.—Debate in the Commons on the question of Privilege.—Lengthy Speech by Mr. Bright.—Defence of Mr. Gladstone and his Policy.—The Government meet the Paper Duty difficulty.—Mr. Bright on Lord Palmerston.—Lord John Russell's Reform Bill of 1860.—Mr. Bright's examination of the Measure.—Meeting at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester.—Mr. Bright on Strikes.—Further Debate on the Reform Bill.—The measure is withdrawn.—Mr. Bright on the Session of 1860.—Addresses at Wakefield, Leeds, and Birmingham.—Parliamentary Debates on Church Rates.—Speeches by Mr. Bright.—Reasons for Abolition.—Ultimate Settlement of the Question.—The Session of 1861.—The Reform Question.—Mr. Gladstone's Budget.—The Paper Duty again.—Mr. Bright defends the Budget.—Protest against the Navy Estimates.

One of the main features of Mr. Gladstone's important budget of 1860 was the proposition for the repeal of the paper duty. This proposal was strenuously resisted by the Conservatives, and it ultimately led to a conflict between the two Houses of the Legislature. On the second reading of the bill embodying the provision, Sir W. Miles moved an amendment that, as the repeal of the paper duty would necessitate the addition of a penny in the pound to the property and income tax, it was the opinion of the House that such repeal was, under such circumstances, at the present moment, inexpedient. A long debate ensued, in the course of which Mr. Milner Gibson, speaking against the amendment, showed the oppressive effects of the duty upon the cheap press, by eating up its profits; and he also referred to the influence which its impoverishment must exert upon its quality. Regarded in this light, the paper duty was really a tax upon knowledge, while it operated as an obstacle to the reward and enterprise of authors.

Mr. Gladstone defended his proposition, pointing out that the paper duty burdened the trade in all its branches, and its effect was to create a claim of monopolies, or a system of narrow and exclusive trading, between the making of paper and the selling of books. The amendment was negatived by 245 to 192. Another debate occurred on the third reading, on a hostile motion by Sir Stafford Northcote. The bill was carried, however, but

only by a small majority, 219 members voting with Government, and 210 against.

When the bill came before the House of Lords, it was rejected by 193 to 104 votes. This rejection raised the important constitutional question as to the right of the House of Lords to reject a bill involving matters of taxation that had received the sanction of the House of Commons. Lord Palmerston, who was by no means so earnest on this question as Mr. Gladstone, moved for a Committee, on the 25th of May, which should institute an inquiry into the precedents on the subject. An amendment was moved by Mr. Duncombe, to the effect that Parliament ought not to adjourn beyond November next, so that another opportunity might be afforded to the House of Lords of accepting the bill.

In the course of the discussion, Mr. Bright said he regretted to find that some members on the opposite side of the House were disposed to treat this question with levity. If he were a member of the party opposite, he thought he should view the question as one of great gravity. He agreed with Mr. Duncombe that there was a growing feeling in the popular mind on this subject; and, from the tone of the press throughout the country, he believed that in the course of a few days there would be a wide and almost universal discontent in reference to the course which the House of Lords had taken. He had felt a great interest in the repeal of the paper duty; but that question fell into utter insignificance in comparison with the greater question which had been raised between the two Houses of Parliament. He considered that the noble lord (Palmerston) had not done himself justice, and that he had not done justice to Parliament and the country in not adopting a more decided course. The course which the noble lord had proposed was perilous to the House, and might prove fatal to the Administration of which he was the chief. He agreed with the amendment, which affirmed that time and reconsideration would probably act as mediators between the two Houses of Parliament.

The Committee—upon which Mr. Bright consented to serve—was ultimately nominated, but Mr. Gladstone was understood to be in favour of a bolder course than that which the Premier recommended.

The conduct of the Lords created great dissatisfaction in the country, and Mr. Bright severely commented upon it at a great meeting held at Manchester. He remarked that there was no dissolution for the House of Lords. 'If a peer dies, there is no

measurable instant of time between the death of him who dies to-day and him who votes to-morrow. The spirit does not pass from the body into space with greater rapidity, or with a more unseen motion, than passes the legislative power from the dead peer to the living one. The only things that do not die are the prejudices, the alarms, the self-interests, the determination to combine for the interest of their body, which necessarily, in all countries and in all ages, have acted upon irresponsible powers, like that which our House of Lords is now assuming to become. Our taxes are drawn from the capital of the country, from the skill of its population, from the toil of all those who work, as no other people in the world perhaps do work; and I say that we shall have reason for ever to be ashamed of ourselves, that our children will have to be ashamed that they come from us, if we do not now resist every attempt to take from the House of Commons that which the constitution has given to them, and which we find to be essential to our security and our freedom —namely, the absolute, the irreversible, and uncontrolled management of the taxation and finances of this great kingdom.'

When the subject again came before the House of Commons on the 1st of June, upon a question by Lord Fermoy, Mr. Bright spoke strongly as to the attitude which the House of Commons ought to assume in resisting any infringement of its privileges and its rights. 'I do not think that we could commit a greater treason,' he said, 'to every branch of the Legislature —to the Crown, to the Commons, and to the House of Lords itself, than to permit a matter of this kind to be passed over as if it were of no importance, and I think the posterity of the existing generation of Englishmen would have reason to look back—with contempt I will say—upon the Parliament of 1860, if it did not thoroughly sift this question to the bottom, and act in accordance with the principles of the Constitution in the defence of those rights and liberties, if we find that they have been in any degree assailed.'

The usages of the Commons had certainly been infringed by the Upper House; and after the Committee had made their report, Lord Palmerston gave notice of three resolutions to be moved by him. On the 5th of July he brought forward the first of these resolutions as follows; 'That the right of granting aids and supplies to the Crown is in the Commons alone, as an essential part of their constitution; and the limitation of all such grants, as to the matter, manner, measure, and time, is only in them.' His lordship, while observing that the constitutional question involved was a very important one, advised the

House to be satisfied with the declarations of their constitutional privileges.

In the debate which followed many important speeches were made. Mr. Gladstone, who reproached the Opposition with being silent partisans of a gigantic innovation, gave his assent to the resolutions because they contained a mild and temperate but a firm declaration of the rights of the House of Commons. As Mr. Collier had shown, after an examination of the pretended precedents, there was not a rag or shred of authority for the claim put forth by the House of Lords. Mr. Disraeli gave his cordial assent to the resolution, which, in his opinion expressed a temperate and wise course on the part of the House. Lord John Russell condemned the act of the House of Lords as rash and unjustifiable, while Mr. Horsman claimed that they had checked the House of Commons in a headlong, precipitate, and mad career.

Mr. Bright followed Mr. Horsman with a very animated and effective speech. He began by expressing his surprise that Mr. Horsman had not concluded his speech by an amendment that would reverse the resolution. He (Mr. Bright) was not satisfied with the course which the House was invited to take. He would not attack the resolutions, nor would he defend them. They were not worthy of the occasion, and bore marks of having been written by more than one hand. It could not be denied that the Lords, if they had not violated the privileges of the Commons, had broken the usage of Parliament. The appointment of the Committee, and the very resolution before the House, condemned, by implication, what the Lords had done; but the course proposed by the Committee would denote in after times a melancholy decline of spirit in the House of Commons. The Lords, to whom the theories of Mr. Horsman had always been palatable, had made repeated efforts to exercise the power of amending money bills which had been defeated by the Commons. Mr. Bright then adduced the precedents on this question, from the year 1407 onwards, and he showed that the resolutions of the House in 1678 and 1691 asserted the absolute control of the Commons over all aids and supplies granted to the Crown, and this right was reasserted in subsequent years. A stream of resolutions and declarations confirmed and consecrated the principle existing for five hundred years, and which he had thought every one admitted—the fundamental and unchangeable principle of the English Constitution, that taxation and representation were inseparable in this kingdom.

The speaker then went on to apply the resolutions and

declarations to the use of the paper duty, which from the time of Queen Anne had crippled a very important industry. It had done very successfully what Queen Anne's Ministers wanted; it had threatened, and, to a large extent, it had strangled the press of the country. As to the question whether sugar should be relieved to the extent of a million, tea of a million, or paper of a million, he came to the conclusion that the abolition of the paper duty was not only a relief to that amount in money, but it was a relief to a great industry, and to several other industries whose prosperity must depend on an abundant and cheap supply of paper. He spoke with some knowledge of the subject, and he had not the least doubt that the abolition of the paper duty was a positive relief to the whole people of the country equal to double the relief which would have been afforded by a reduction equal in amount to the duty on the articles of tea and sugar.

Mr. Bright then proceeded to show why the House of Commons was the best judge in the country of what was necessary for the trade, and also what was required by the financial condition of the country:—

'First of all, there are among us a good many sagacious men of all sorts. There are, as I know, some very sagacious landowners; we found it very hard to beat them, even when they had a very bad case. We have a very sagacious gentleman down here who spoke to-night, and who, whatever be the question which comes before us, always finds some very fitting object for his merciless and unscrupulous vituperation. We know, many of us intimately, all the details connected with these questions; in fact, I suppose there is not a trade in this country of any importance or note that cannot find its representatives in this House. For many years past we have had the absolute control of questions of finance, and I undertake to declare, notwithstanding what the right hon. gentleman has stated, that there is not a representative body in the world which during the last twenty years has done more in the way of financial and fiscal reforms with greater advantage to the people. And yet, at the end of that period, when the triumphs of this House are to be found not in granite and bronze monuments, but in the added comforts of the population, and in the increased and undoubted loyalty of the people, you are now, forsooth, asked by the right hon. gentleman to abdicate your functions, and to invite 400 gentlemen, who are not traders, who have never been financiers, who do not possess means in any degree equalling your own of understanding the question—you are to ask them to join your councils, and not only to advise, but to check, and even to control.'

They were now asked, continued Mr. Bright, in terms not ambiguous to overthrow the fabric which had grown up in the country, and which had existed without damage for at least five hundred years. The House of Lords had not behaved with fair honour towards the House of Commons in this matter; for every man of them who knew anything about what

he was voting for knew that the House of Commons repealed the paper excise, not merely because it wished to remit a million of taxes, but because it thought that to strangle a great industry was an injurious mode of raising revenue, and therefore it transferred that amount of taxation from the paper excise to the income tax. Moreover, it was an unfair proceeding to refuse to allow the paper duty to be repealed while they retained the additional income tax, which was substituted for it. The Lords had trampled on the confidence and taken advantage of the faith of the House of Commons. As to their having rejected the Paper Duty Abolition Bill by a large majority, a peer had confessed to him that it would certainly have passed if it had come before those only who regularly attended the sittings of the House. 'About two hundred members, who hardly ever come there, were let loose for the occasion.'

Mr. Bright urged that the Lords had thrown out this bill by a large majority, thinking that by so doing they were making a violent attack on the Ministry, and especially on the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It would have been consonant with the dignity of the House of Commons to have passed another bill to repeal the paper duty, thus giving the Lords an opportunity of reconsidering their position. If this course had been taken, without passion and without collision, the difficulty would have been got over. With regard to this paper duty, 'repeal was consistent with the policy of the Whigs before Sir Robert Peel came into power, with the policy of Sir Robert Peel's Government, of Lord Derby's Government, of Lord John Russell's Government, of Lord Aberdeen's Government, of Lord Palmerston's Government, of Lord Derby's last Government, and of the existing Government. The policy of the repeal of the paper duty is the recognized policy of this House, and it is the admitted interest of this country. Then, why, unless it be for a party triumph, unless it be to attack a particular Minister, why is this question of £700,000 this year, and less than double that sum in future years, raised to an importance which does not belong to it? and why, for the sake of a party triumph, are the great interests connected with it to be damaged and tortured, as they now are, by the action of one House of Parliament?'

The speaker then paid a high tribute to Mr. Gladstone, who was especially attacked through the policy on the repeal of the paper duty, affirming that in 1853 his financial measures were the chief strength of the Government of Lord Aberdeen; and that the power and authority which Lord Palmerston's Administration had acquired during the present session had been gained

mainly as the consequence of his beneficent propositions. His budget had been received with universal approbation. Having replied to Mr. Horsman's deprecatory and inaccurate remarks upon the French Treaty, Mr. Bright referred to the great increase in our commerce, adding, 'When you now attack, through the Chancellor of the Exchequer, principles the adoption of which has wrought this great good, you are not, in my opinion, pursuing a course which will enhance your reputation with the country which you profess to represent. There is not, I contend, a man who labours and sweats for his daily bread, there is not a woman living in a cottage who strives to make her humble home happy and comfortable for her husband and her children, to whom the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer have not brought hope, and to whom his measures, which have been defended with an eloquence few can equal, and with a logic none can contest, have not administered consolation. I appeal to the past and present condition of the country, and I ask you, solemnly, to oppose no obstacle to the realization of those great and good principles of legislation.'

Mr. Bright complained that Lord Palmerston had not shown more courage in this matter, and thus concluded:—

'I fear this session may as a consequence become memorable as that in which, for the first time, the Commons of England have surrendered a right which for five hundred years they had maintained unimpaired. I, at least, and those who act with me, will be clear from any participation in this; we shall be free from the shame which must indelibly attach to the chief actors in these proceedings. I protested against the order of reference which the noble lord proposed, though I sat and laboured on the Committee with earnest fidelity on behalf of the House of Commons. I have felt it an honour to sit in this House up to this time, and I hope that hereafter the character of this House will not be impaired by the course which is about to be taken. I have endeavoured to show to my countrymen what I consider to be almost the treason which is about to be committed against them. I have refused to dishonour the memory of such members as Coke and Selden, and Glanville and Pym; and if defeated in this struggle, I shall have this consolation, that I have done all I can to maintain the honour of this House, and that I have not sacrificed the interests which my constituents committed to my care.'

The whole of Lord Palmerston's resolutions were agreed to without a division, but the question was not allowed to remain in this stage. Lord Fermoy subsequently moved a resolution protesting against the encroachments of the Lords, but it was rejected by 177 to 138. As the Excise duty on paper was thus continued, in consequence of the action of the Upper House, Mr. Gladstone met the difficulty by proposing an adjustment of the Customs duty on paper with reference to the French Treaty. The paper manufacturers exerted their utmost influence to de-

feat the measure, alleging special circumstances which exempted their case from the rule of Free Trade. The Conservatives warmly espoused the cause of the paper-makers, but Mr. Gladstone delivered a powerful and conclusive speech in favour of his new measure. Mr. Puller moved an amendment, and was supported by the Conservative leaders, but the propositions of the Government were eventually adopted by 266 votes to 233.

The constitutional question was again adverted to by Mr. Bright on the 10th of August. After sketching the bolder policy which Lord Palmerston ought to have adopted on this question—and which he would have adopted if he had had the spirit of a Chatham or a Canning—he said, 'There is such a thing as treason. It is a crime which is probably known to every country. We have it in our law. It is committed generally against a monarchy or against a state. It may have in it much that is evil, and it may have in it much that is good. Treason of that kind is a crime which may load a man with shame for ever, or it may cover him with lasting renown. But there is another kind of treason, which is treason against a people, which may be committed by a Minister of the Crown, by an assenting Cabinet, and by a compliant Legislative body; but that is a treason which is all evil, which has no good whatever in it; it covers no man or body of men with renown; but it covers them with contempt and infamy, decreed I believe by the just judgment of posterity. I hope and pray that when the Imperial pen of history in after times shall tell the story of our doings in this session of the British Parliament, it may not have to say that the Prime Minister and his colleagues, and the House of Commons supporting them, let down the power of the House of Commons, and sacrificed and betrayed—as I fear we are in danger of sacrificing and betraying—those most solemn and important rights which we are bound to maintain, I undertake to say, by sanctions and engagements stronger than any which oaths can give.'

Lord Fermoy, who had announced his intention of moving a resolution with regard to the conduct of the House of Lords, now said he had no alternative but to abandon the question during the present session; and this important matter dropped. The general feeling of the country, however, was with those who protested against the unconstitutional action of the House of Lords.

We now pass on to another important question. The Liberal Government pledged themselves to bring in a Reform Bill during the session of 1860, and on the 1st of March the scheme

was introduced by that veteran reformer Lord John Russell. It was proposed to reduce the borough franchise to £6, a step which would have had the effect of increasing the number of voters from 440,000 to 634,000. Twenty-five seats were to be taken from small places returning two members, and divided among new constituencies. Leave was given to bring in the bill, and Mr. Cardwell, Secretary for Ireland, also obtained leave to bring in a bill for that country which reduced the qualification for voting for counties from £12 (required by the Act of 1850) to £10, and substituted a borough franchise of £6 for £8. The Lord Advocate further introduced a measure for Scotland, providing a £10 occupation franchise for counties, and a borough franchise of £6. The property qualifications for counties to be reduced from £10 to £5.

The House generally exhibited little enthusiasm over these measures, but in the debate on the second reading, on the 19th of March, Mr. Bright delivered a vigorous speech. He said that in one respect he was in the same condition as Mr. Disraeli; he did not desire to reject this bill on the second reading, and he should not endeavour to persuade the House that it was a dangerous and fatal measure; on the contrary, though anxious for a good measure of Parliamentary Reform, he was ready to make due allowance for the difficulty of dealing with this question. It was evident that the bill met with two kinds of objectors—one who thought it went too far, another who wished it to go further. He did not oppose or advocate it upon either ground. He regarded the measure as the fulfilment of a pledge given by the Government. As to the redistribution of seats, he had thought it would be better that the reform should be by steps, and this was a bill for reducing the franchise in counties and boroughs; it did not settle the question of disfranchisement, or the transfer of seats; it rather unsettled it. If it passed, it would not add more than 160,000 to the borough constituency. And how many of these would be working men? Not more than 100,000; how, then, could it be said that they would swamp the other classes? The objection that the measure did not go far enough, was more difficult to answer, and was a rational objection. He thought this parsimony on the part of the House was a mistake; that the character of the lower classes would justify a more liberal view of the matter. But if 300,000 or 400,000 were admitted to the franchise, he could not refuse the measure, because, in his opinion, those numbers ought to be doubled.

Mr. Bright said he considered the bill failed in certain

points. He objected to the ratepaying and other clauses of the bill. As to the ballot, that question would be brought under consideration on a future occasion, and he was convinced that, under this bill, there would be a still greater necessity for that measure. He pointed out that circumstances in 1860 were very different from those under which the bill of 1832 was passed. 'There is no howling wind, no imminent convulsion; but there is the steady, the ever-growing, the irresistible tide of public opinion; there is the consciousness among millions of your countrymen that Parliament does not adequately represent them, and is not just to them; and silently, but surely and inevitably, this opinion is marching on to its triumph. The very footprints in which these gentlemen on the Treasury Bench trod not long ago, are now swept away, and the point which you occupied not long since on this question is submerged and gone. I ask you not to resist this growing and gathering opinion. By a concession even so small as that which it is the object of this bill to make, you will show that you have a generous confidence in your countrymen—you will show that you believe in the constitution of your country, that it really means a representation of the people; and you will show further, what I hope you will prove by your votes on this bill, that you are willing the institution you boast of so much, and pretend to love so much, shall repose upon the good will, the intelligence, and the virtue of your countrymen.

After a debate extending over many evenings, the bill was read a second time without a division. On the 12th of April, Mr. Bright spoke on the question of Reform at a great meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, when seven thousand persons were present. In the course of this speech, he defended the right of working men to engage in strikes when the condition of trade made such a step necessary. In nine cases out of ten, perhaps in ninety-nine out of a hundred, a strike would be better avoided; but the strike was a reserve power. He continued:—

'But if these strikes are sometimes—it may be often, it may be mostly—bad, and that, I think all classes of persons would agree to, still the House of Commons and Mr. Whiteside and his friends are not the parties to upbraid the working men with what they do upon this matter. The House of Commons itself was a great trades union from 1815 to 1846. (*Cheers.*) You know that the Shibboleth of country members was wheat at so much, barley at so much, oats at so much; and one of them, wishing to be minute in the profession of his faith—the member for the North Riding of Yorkshire—was for establishing a proportionate price for new milk cheese. (*Laughter.*) Now we combined against this system. We "struck." (*Loud applause.*) Why, nature itself, constant and beneficent as she always is, "struck" against this inhuman

system. The very harvest rotted in your fields. As in the old time the bondsmen of Egypt were liberated by means of the plagues of Egypt, so famine and fever, and an exodus greater than that which Moses led, was necessary, and came and succeeded in striking off the manacles from the industry of the people of this kingdom.'

Ministers had appointed the 4th of June for going into Committee on the Reform Bill, but when that date arrived there was little chance, considering the position of affairs, that the bill could be got through both Houses in time to become law. During the debate which now arose, however, Mr. Bright made another urgent appeal to the House to pass the bill, and so settle this important question. There could be little difference of opinion, he said, as to the object of the discussion. The real question was, not whether the House would wait until the census had been taken—as Sir J. Fergusson's motion asked them to do—or until the Irish and Scotch bills could be discussed, but whether they were willing during the present session to pass any measure of Reform. He did not believe that the views of the leaders of the Opposition differed materially from those of Her Majesty's Government on this question, though he had been unable to persuade his followers to pursue a course which he was prepared to take himself. The subject of Parliamentary Reform had been recommended from the Throne, and votes had been given in that House in favor of Reform; yet the other side still resisted even so moderate a measure as this, which proposed to open the door to 300,000 or 350,000 in the United Kingdom, or one in twenty of the men now excluded; and no one could say that this concession would be perilous to the constitution.

Mr. Bright observed, however, that it had been frequently asserted during the discussion that the admission of this number would give up the representation of the country and the power of Parliament to a class altogether unworthy of the trust —an assertion which, having had ample means of knowing the wishes, opinions, and character of the working classes, he strenuously denied, and could disprove by evidence. He had made a series of calculations, from which he estimated that the annual income of the working classes derived from wages was £312,000,000, and the aggregate income of all the other classes was only one million sterling more than this amount; but the former had not a single member to represent them in that House, nor a voice in the choice of a member to speak their opinions as to the amount of taxation, or the mode in which it was laid on the shoulders of the people. With regard to this bill, his opin-

ion was that, though he should have wished it to go further, if the franchise were brought down to £6, it would fix the point just where a man might hope by frugality and industry to bring himself within the line, and therefore would be of the greatest benefit to the working classes. As to the redistribution of seats, the present measure only touched the fringe of the question. He implored the House, with all the power and earnestness which it was possible for him to infuse into words, to pass the bill, and treat their countrymen with generosity and justice.

On the division, ministers had a majority of 21, but as it was practically hopeless to attempt to get through with the bill, on the 11th of June Lord John Russell announced its withdrawal. Mr. Bright said that although he could not blame the noble lord for the course he had taken, he lamented to find his own hopes blighted. But it would be unjust to attack the Government for difficulties for which they were not entirely responsible. The session, however, had not been wholly without results: the reform of the Tariff was of itself a measure of great importance, so was the Commercial Treaty, and nothing could exceed the good faith and honour of the French Government in their endeavours to carry out the provisions of the treaty. He had authority for saying that, as the Convention was now proceeding, the results of the treaty would be such as to exceed the sanguine anticipations of its friends. With regard to the Reform Bill, it was a very moderate and a very reasonable one, and the opposition to it had been emboldened by members on the Liberal side of the House, who wanted a pure Whig Government, which would never be seen again—which, in fact, was just as much extinct as the dodo. But he preferred that the Government should withdraw their bill rather than that it should be mangled in committee, and a £6 franchise altered to one of £8, which would be most pernicious. He hoped that the House, if it would not have a Reform Bill for itself, would not allow its rights to be impaired by letting in the pretensions of the Peers. If in addition to Mr. Gladstone's commercial measures there had been an extension of the suffrage, he thought it would have been said in after times that there had been no session of the Parliament of England comparable to that of 1860 for the good it had given the people, and for the binding effect which its legislation had had between the great body of the people and the three estates of the realm.

The bill was withdrawn, and the question of Reform was

postponed to another and more convenient period, as it had been postponed before.

Towards the close of 1860, Mr. Bright on several occasions directly addressed the working classes. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Wakefield Mechanics' Institute, on the 20th November, he said that there was nothing so entirely neglected in the education of the working classes as the consideration of the principle upon which the permanent prosperity and peace of nations or of commonwealths were based. They were infinitely more important than the ephemeral struggles and triumphs which attended the ambition of a statesman. The science of political economy was of immense importance. If through bad principles of legislation, if through error of government, public resources were wasted, if a vast quantity of our industry were misdirected, if such great blunders were made, we might have rich men and rich families, but we might rely upon it the multitude would still be poor, and the little comforts they had would still be precarious. By governing more wisely, we might give greater glory to the country, dispense greater happiness amongst the families of which it was composed, and do that which was not a little thing—they might do something to 'justify the ways of God to man.'

Early in December Mr. Bright attended the inauguration of the Leeds Working Men's Parliamentary Association, and paid a high tribute to the working classes. He said he had asked himself, 'Why this dread of the people? I have lived amongst them all my life—I never had any distrust of them, I never expected perfection in them any more than I found it elsewhere or conceived it to exist in myself, but I say that for those qualities that go to make a people, that are requisite to fulfil the duties of citizenship, the working classes of this country need not bow the head before the highest in the land.' With regard to the question of Parliamentary Reform, he said Reform might be delayed, but it could not be withheld. It was because he dreaded disorder, because he knew that resistance to just demands was the fertile parent of confusion in every state, because he wished England to be great, and glorious, and free, and moral, that he urged the working classes, the unenfranchised millions, to insist upon their just rights; and it was for those causes that he counselled the ruling classes to grant those rights, although it might be that his counsel would be in vain.

The Town Hall, Birmingham, was crowded on the 29th of January, 1861, with constituents of Mr. Bright anxious to hear

his address on that occasion. He spoke at length upon the questions of taxation and expenditure, remarking that he had never heard the feeblest protest raised in the House of Lords against the extravagance of the Government. It was worth their while to know that, with very few exceptions, the members of the present peerage owed their peerages to creations within the last hundred years. The origin of them came from the rotten borough system: any man who could get four, five, or six seats in the House of Commons at his command to serve the Government of his day, could by ways known to such a gentleman procure for himself, in all probability, the dignity of a peerage. They might single out a few families who had come down from remote times, the majority of whom had generally shown themselves considerate and just to the people of the country; but the modern peerage was bred in the slime and corruption of the rotten borough system, and they need not look to a House so constituted for any great anxiety to save the pockets of the nation. Mr. Bright referred to the good feeling which subsisted amongst the working classes notwithstanding their trials, and the taxation under which they laboured, and claimed for himself and his friends to be the true Conservatives in the country. England's past policy had loaded us with debt. It had desolated millions of houses, and added immeasurably to the chaos and infinitely to the sufferings of Europe. He would reverse this policy. He would practise a religious abstention from all the tumults and quarrels which might arise upon the Continent of Europe. As for the people, they were entitled to share in the bounty of Heaven so freely bestowed. 'As you have revolutionized your commercial legislation, revolutionize also your foreign policy, and bring it to the standard of common sense and common morality. Permit the people, for whom my very heart bleeds when I see the sufferings which so many of them endure—permit them to enjoy that which they created. The Crown will gain fresh lustre; institutions that are good will be more stable; and this nation, to its humblest homestead, will be ever the more contented and the more happy.'

In three successive sessions, Mr. Bright addressed the House of Commons on the subject of Church Rates. The first occasion was on the 27th of April, 1860, in the debate on the third reading of Sir John Trelawny's Church Rates Abolition Bill. The measure had been strongly opposed on its second reading, and also in committee, and on the order of the day for the third reading Mr. Whiteside moved its rejection. It was un-

derstood that a determined effort would be made to throw out the bill.

Only three important speeches were made, namely, those by Mr. Whiteside, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Bright, the first and second of whom strongly opposed the measure. Mr. Bright began by expressing his indebtedness to Mr. Whiteside for having, by his physical-force oratory, infused some new life into this question; but he had not done much to satisfy that great portion of the people who objected to Church-rates, and thought that they ought not to be permanently maintained. Mr. Whiteside had attached extraordinary importance to the opinions of the Wesleyan body on this question, but the large majority of Wesleyans united with the great body of other Dissenters in opposition to Church-rates. A total of more than eight hundred petitions had been presented from the Wesleyans in favour of this bill. Moreover, no inconsiderable number of regular attendants upon the Church of England joined the Dissenters in opposition to Church-rates.

Mr. Bright detailed what had taken place in the town of Rochdale on this question. Contests had been carried on in past years with a vigour and a determination, and, if they liked it, an animosity which had not been surpassed in any other part of the kingdom. But the result of the struggle was that the Church-rate was for ever entirely abolished in that parish, and for many years now the parish had been a model of tranquillity upon this question. 'It would not be enough that it should be a model of tranquillity if the result had followed which the learned gentleman foretold in such dolorous language, that religion would be uncared for, and that the Gospel would no longer be preached to the poor; but I will undertake to say that since that contest the venerable old parish church has had laid out upon it, in repairing and beautifying it, from money subscribed not altogether, but mainly, by churchmen, ten times —ay, twenty times as much as was ever expended upon it during a far longer period of years in which Church-rates were levied.'

Touching upon another important point, Mr. Bright said he wished Mr. Whiteside had told them why, year by year, there had been a growing power in that House in opposition to Church-rates, and why there was a secession from their advocates throughout the country. There were only two courses with reference to this most mischievous impost—either to leave the law exactly as it was, with all its irritating incidents, or to adopt this bill. Then came this remarkably effective passage in the orator's speech:—

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'I often have occasion in this House to give hope to hon. gentlemen opposite. They are probably the most despairing political party that any country ever had within its borders. They despair of almost everything. They despaired of agriculture. Agriculture triumphs. They despair of their Church, yet whenever that Church has been left to its own resources and to the zeal of its members its triumph has been manifest to the country and to the world. Are you made of different material from the five millions of people who go to the Dissenting chapels of England and Wales? You have your churches—I speak of the old ones, not of those recently erected by means of voluntary contributions,—you have your churches, which you call national, and you have them for nothing. You have your ministers paid out of property anciently bequeathed or entrusted to the State for their use. In that respect you stand in a far better position for undertaking what, if Church-rates are abolished, you must undertake, than do the great body of your dissenting brethren. Have you less zeal, have you less liberality, than they have? Do not you continually boast in this House that you are the owners of the great bulk of the landed property of the country? Are you not the depositaries of political power, and do you not tell us that when a Dissenter becomes rich he always walks away from the chapel into your church? If this be so, am I appealing in vain to you, or reasoning in vain with you, when I try to encourage you to believe that if there were no Church-rates the members of your church and your congregations would be greatly improved, and that, as has taken place in the parish in which I live, your churches would be better supported by your own voluntary and liberal contributions than they can ever be by the penny per pound issuing from the pockets of men who do not attend your church, and who are rendered ten times more hostile to it by the very effort to make them contribute to its support.?'

Mr. Bright went on to express his belief that Church-rates must before long be abolished. He also referred to the voluntary exertions of the Dissenters, and asked 'Throughout England and Wales what would be the condition of your population, your religious establishments, your education, if it were not for the liberality of those sects of whom the right hon. and learned gentleman thinks fit to speak in disparaging terms?' He did not disguise from the House that he agreed with the views of Mr. Miall and the Liberation Society as to the disestablishment of the Church; but he believed, with them, that after that had taken place the Church would be as great, as powerful, and as respected as it ever was at any period of its history. Mr. Bright then reminded the House that in Ireland the vestry-cess, the Church-rate of that country, had been abolished,—and what had been the effect upon the Protestant Church of Ireland? In all human probability that Church would have been absolutely uprooted but for the large measures of reform applied to it; and the Church of England without Church-rates would be as great and as useful as now. Examples in Wales and in Scotland showed the impulse that might be given to voluntary efforts. Property in Scotland had not gone with the Free Church; yet what a vast result had been produced by religious zeal, fervour, and munificence!

The hon. member said he should slander the Church of England if he were to pretend that it would not be as liberal as any other religious body, while its congregations would be as united as those of Dissenters, and its action would be greatly strengthened. Mr. Bright thus closed his telling speech :—

'This question has now come to a crisis; and I ask the House to consider whether it would not be to the advantage of the Church, of morality, religion, and the public peace, that it should now be set at rest once and for ever. The right hon. and learned gentleman—it is one of the faults of a high classical education—following the example of the right hon. gentleman who delighted us all with a brilliant but most illogical speech last night, affrighted us with an account of what took place under the democracies of Greece, and asks us to follow the example of those who were believers in the paganism of ancient Rome. He says, Did not the Roman emperors, consuls, and people go in procession after the vile gods and goddesses which they worshipped? It is true they did, and I hope the right hon. and learned gentleman regrets by this time that he asked us to follow an example of that kind. Rome has perished, and the religion which it professed has perished with it. The Christian religion is wholly different, and if there be one thing written more legibly than another in every page of that Book on which you profess that your Church is founded it is that men should be just one to another, kind and brotherly one to another, and should not ask of each other to do that which they are not willing themselves to do. I say that this law of Church-rates is a law which violates, and violates most obviously and outrageously, every law of justice and of mercy which is written in that Book, and it is because I believe it does so that I am certain that it never can be of advantage to your Church, if your Church be a true Church; and, believing that, and feeling how much the interests and sympathies and wishes of millions of our countrymen are in favour of the abolition of this impost, I ask you to do what I am ready to do—to give a cordial support to the third reading of this bill of my hon. friend.'

The third reading of the bill was carried by 235 votes to 226, and the measure passed. When it went up to the House of Lords, however, it was rejected by a majority of 97.

The subject of Church-rates being still left an open question, much controversy ensued in the country, and in the following session of 1861 the friends of abolition again endeavoured to procure a satisfactory settlement of the matter. Sir John Trelawny re-introduced his bill, and on the motion for the second reading a long discussion took place. Sir W. Heathcote moved the rejection of the bill; but Mr. Gladstone, while unable to support the measure for abolition, admitted that on both sides there was a growing persuasion that it would be for the credit of the Legislature that this question should be settled. He suggested that the Legislature should begin by converting the power of the majority of the parish into a right, firmly maintaining the right of the parish to tax itself giving

to those parishes where the ancient Church-rate had lapsed the power of raising a voluntary rate.

Mr. Bright again spoke at length on behalf of the bill. He observed that as Mr. Gladstone proposed virtually to abolish Church-rates, he ought to begin by voting for the bill. He denied that the evils which Mr. Gladstone supposed likely to happen, if this bill passed, would happen; but if so, what a deadness would it argue in the population towards the Established Church? He appealed to hon. gentlemen opposite on the question of the amount involved in these rates. He believed that £250,000 was the whole matter, and of that it might be fairly assumed £100,000 probably—though he would take any figure they liked—was paid by those whom they were now prepared to exempt. Therefore the whole question probably for the great Church of England was only this—a matter of £150,000 a year. What did the Dissenters object to? asked Mr. Bright. They felt that this was a struggle for supremacy, a supremacy asserted on the part of a great establishment which was as much political as religious. The hon. member then proceeded to denounce the practice of the sale of livings in the Church, quoting examples of this practice—examples which he acknowledged would be very amusing if they were not very shocking; and he asked whether such things could be pointed out in the Nonconformist churches of England and Wales.

Coming next to the great differences of opinion existing in the Church of England, Mr. Bright glanced in particular at the recently published *Essays and Reviews*, and affirmed that for a variety of reasons the Dissenters were indisposed to acknowledge the Church of England to be supreme over them. That Church was a divided Church, and he asked whether it was worth while to take the proposition of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or any other proposition based upon ignorance of the state of feeling among the Nonconformist population of England. Having shown what the Dissenters had accomplished by voluntary effort, Mr. Bright said, 'You must not misunderstand the character of the Nonconformists. They come down from the Puritans of an earlier period, who, I believe, have gained for England all that there is of freedom in the English constitution. That is the opinion of Hume, the historian, and I think it must be the opinion of every one who carefully reads history. The lamp which these Puritans first lit has been kept burning by the Nonconformists of a later day. Those Puritans took their rise from the hour when the religious organization

of England was first dissevered from the Church of Rome. The principles they held have never died out, but have continually spread, and have found greater and greater acceptance with all classes of the people. I assure the House in all sincerity—and I believe in my conscience that I only speak the literal truth—that any attempt to settle this question by leaving any shred of Church-rate unrepealed will be a failure, and that the Nonconformists themselves will never abandon this question until a complete victory is won.'

Mr. Disraeli opposed the Bill, but Lord John Russell declared that the sooner Church-rates were abolished the better would it be for the Church, and the stronger would be its foundations. The amendment was negatived by 281 to 266, and the bill was read a second time.

But another great struggle took place on the third reading. Mr. Cross, Mr. Newdegate, and others supported substitutionary plans instead of this bill for simple abolition; but Mr. Bright said, all the plans which had been proposed did not hit the grievance. The object was to get rid of every shred of what the Dissenters regarded as the supremacy of the Church of England in relation to this particular question; to place the Church and other sects in that respect upon an equality. The resistance to Church-rates was not grounded upon the amount; there must be something deeper in the matter than money. He was going, he said, to vote for the third reading of the bill, but he was ready to assent to a compromise by which the compulsory power of levying the rate should be withdrawn, and the term of total abolition delayed.

When the division was taken, it was found that the numbers were exactly even—274 for the bill, and 274 against. Under these singular circumstances, the Speaker was called upon to give a casting vote—a right very rarely exercised in our Parliamentary history. He said that as far as he could collect the opinion of the House from the course of the debate, it was in favour of some settlement of the question different from that contained in the present bill; consequently he must give his vote against it, not being willing to take upon himself the responsibility of the proposed change. The measure was therefore lost—a result hailed with frantic cheers by the Opposition.

The question was yet again raised in the session of 1862, when Sir J. Trelawny re-introduced his measure for abolition. In the debate on the second reading on the 14th of May, Mr. Sotheron Estcourt, abandoning a plan he had formerly proposed, moved a resolution to the effect that it was unjust to

abolish Church-rates until some substitute for them had been provided. Mr. Bright sarcastically observed that Mr. Estcourt, having repudiated and rejected every scheme, including his own, did not give the House good and encouraging advice in asking it to agree to his resolution. He had argued that it was founded upon a constitutional principle; but things had totally changed in the last seven or eight hundred years, and these rates were now incompatible with the rights and interests of the people. All he asked was, to a certain extent, a complement of the Toleration Act. Would Churchmen refuse to do what the humblest sect of Dissenters did? Would a body that held the great bulk of the land, boasted of its wealth, and had the seats of learning at its disposal, be the only sect not liberal enough to support its own churches? He believed that these rates could not be maintained, and Mr. Estcourt himself did not believe that any scheme which had been submitted to the House could do anything material to settle this question, except Sir J. Trelawny's. If this question was to be finally settled, he agreed that it ought to be taken up by the Government, who should submit to the House a measure based upon a principle satisfactory to the country, and stake their existence upon it. If they would not do this, then they should abdicate their functions as statesmen, and take their places upon the Treasury bench as superior clerks. Twenty-eight years had not driven off the assailants from this question, and twenty-eight years more would not do it. He implored the House to make this session—in which nothing had yet been done except the spending of money gathered hardly from the people—famous for one thing, namely, the doing to all our neighbours as we would wish them to do to us.

When the division came to be taken, the bill was lost by one vote—286 members voting for the second reading, and 287 against. Mr. Estcourt made an attempt to settle the question by his resolutions, but these were subsequently withdrawn, as was also a scheme for commutation proposed by Mr. Newdegate. But an ever-growing public opinion had condemned Church-rates, and, after many abortive attempts at a settlement, the question was finally set at rest by Mr. Gladstone. His Compulsory Church-rate Abolition Bill was passed on the 31st of July, 1868; but the chief credit for the removal of this long-standing grievance must be awarded to Sir J. Trelawny, Mr. Bright, and the other indefatigable pioneers in the movement for securing religious equality.

When the session of 1861 opened, the Royal Speech, contrary to expectation, made no mention of Parliamentary Re-

form. Mr. White accordingly moved an amendment to add a paragraph to the Address on the subject. Mr. Bright, who was amongst those steadfast reformers bitterly disappointed at the course of the Government, said he could not express his grief at what had fallen from Lord John Russell on this important subject, and at the tone in which he had treated it. When the present Government came into power, pledges, public and private, had been given on the subject of Reform, of the most explicit character; and he asked the House whether it was right that the representation should be amended or not; and, if right, whether it was not better that it should be done now. Mr. Bright recapitulated very briefly the recent history of the Reform question, reminding the House that in 1831 they were within twenty-four hours of a revolution. And the course which they were now called upon to take was not a safe course. If it was good for those entitled to a vote to be represented, it was not good for that House that they should be permanently excluded. The question could not remain as it was; it must be settled; and he believed that, in this session above all others, a moderate and useful measure of Reform, if the Government were in earnest, might pass both Houses of Parliament. He was giving the House wise counsel, and warning them of dangers which, though regarded as remote, had overtaken statesmen of every country who had neglected them, and had overwhelmed many. Ministers and members ran the risk of losing, first, their own self-respect, and, secondly, the respect of the country; and when that had happened, a more unpleasant and a more unhappy time would have come than could possibly come as the result of such a judicious and moderate measure as might have been passed this session.

Such was the temporary apathy, however, that had overtaken a large majority of the House on this question, that Mr. White's amendment was negatived by 124 to 46.

Mr. Gladstone's Budget for 1861 was brought forward on the 15th of April. The expenditure was estimated at £70,000,000, and the income at £71,823,000, this being the largest estimate of revenue hitherto made. The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to apply the surplus in the reduction of the income tax by one penny per pound, and to abolish the duty on paper. The first-mentioned reduction would absorb £850,000, and the latter £665,000. The proposal to abolish the paper duty led to a protracted discussion on the order for going into committee. Mr. Gladstone's propositions were attacked by Mr. Baring, Sir S. Northcote, Mr. S. Fitzgerald, and Mr. Horsman, the last

named member expressing his great regret that the question of the paper duties and the difference with the House of Lords should have been brought on again.

Mr. Bright ably defended the Budget. He complained that Mr. Horsman had endeavoured needlessly to revive a subject which it was obvious there was no wish on the part of many members to have imported into the question before the House. Touching his objection to the combination of the resolutions in one bill, he said Mr. Horsman would find in the journals of Parliament, no further back than 1801, 1802, and 1803, that the House of Commons had repeatedly, and almost constantly, taken the very course the Chancellor of the Exchequer had recommended. As to Mr. Horsman's speech generally, there was not a horror in connection with the public affairs of Europe and the world he had not treated them to. Had he not spoken of dangers worse

> 'Than fables yet have feigned or fear conceived—
> Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire'?

If he believed all he had told them, he ought to present a resolution condemning the Government for not entering on an expenditure of £80,000,000 instead of £70,000,000, and should refuse utterly to consider any question of repealing any tax whatsoever. Then there was the hon. member for Huntingdon (Mr. Baring), whom he did not hold to be an authority on financial matters. 'I have known the hon. gentleman in this House for eighteen years, and it has been my misfortune to have observed that he has always been wrong. Now an authority that is always wrong comes at last to be no authority at all. Everybody knows that *Moore's Almanack*, which is sometimes right, is reckoned to be no authority, except among the ignorant; and I say that the hon. member for Huntingdon, who on these questions has been invariably wrong, cannot be a safe authority for us to follow.'

Discussing the question of the surplus, Mr. Bright said his creed was always to believe a Chancellor of the Exchequer when he admitted a surplus; he assumed, therefore, that the surplus was a real one; and the question then remaining was whether the remission of duties was judicious and fair to the various interests of the country. The proposed remission went half to direct and half to indirect taxation; and he asked why there should be so much hostility to a particular remission, and whether it was worth while to assail a Chancellor of the Exchequer on this ground merely to gain a party triumph. It

had been said that a preference should be given to tea and sugar but those who said this did not know the real incidence of these taxes. He was as great an enemy to the tea and sugar duties as any one, but he believed that the remission of the paper duties would give a greater relief to the industrious classes than the reduction of the war duties on tea and sugar. Mr. Fitzgerald had asserted that this was a political budget, framed to conciliate him (Mr. Bright). He admitted that it was his budget; he approved and adopted it, and therefore it was his; and in a few days it would be the budget and the policy of the House, because they approved of and would adopt it. The question was whether, in adopting the policy he had recommended, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had gone beyond his duty. Mr. Bright asked whether much of the present security and prosperity of the realm was not fairly to be attributed to the policy and the budgets of the last twenty years, which he had always supported, and which the hon. gentlemen opposite, unhappily for their reputation, had always opposed? And he closed his speech with this peroration, interesting from the personal point of view:—

'Sir, I have seen a good deal of party contest in this House. I have no objection to the greatest efforts of the greatest party, if those efforts are guided by an honest desire for the public good; but I observe that these party contests are generally fought in a field which, as one of our own writers and poets has described it, is "a field of ambition in which truly the labourers are many, but the harvest is scarcely worth the carrying away." I despise those triumphs. I scorn altogether those laurels. (*Cheers.*) If I contended here for the mastery, if I looked for fame, if I desired to be remembered hereafter in connection with the great struggles on the floor of this House, it should be by associating my name directly with measures which I felt in my conscience it was wise and just in Parliament to give, and which it would be a blessing for the people to receive. (*Loud cheers.*) Sir, I have looked at this budget, I hope, with an impartial and an honest eye. I believe that it meets these two conditions—that it is just for Parliament to pass, and that it will be beneficent towards the people for whom it is intended; and on these grounds alone I shall give it my hearty support.' (*Cheers.*)

The House ultimately went into committee, and on the 6th of May Mr. Gladstone formally announced his intention of including all the chief financial propositions in one bill. He was acrimoniously attacked for this policy by Lord Robert Cecil and other members, but supported in his decision by such high authorities on Parliamentary procedure as Sir James Graham, Sir William Heathcote, and Mr. Walpole. The Government carried their propositions, and the paper duty controversy was finally disposed of on the 12th of July, when the Royal assent was given to the bill repealing the Excise duty on paper.

Mr. Bright entered a protest this year against the Navy Estimates. In introducing these estimates on the 11th of March, Lord Clarence Paget urged upon the House the necessity of proceeding at once with the construction of iron-cased vessels similar to the French *La Gloire* and the English *Warrior*. Mr. Bright said he firmly believed that the French fleet had been prodigiously overrated, and that alarms had been raised upon the foundation of monstrous falsehoods. He would be the last man to charge the noble lord with endeavouring to create a false impression; but such was the effect of official life that a man somehow took colour from the atmosphere he lived in. The Treasury bench seemed to be not 'the bourne from which no traveller returns,' but the bourne from which no honest man returned. Neither Lord Palmerston nor any of his colleagues had made a distinct statement on this question. 'They do not condescend to particularize on this matter, but they allow these alarms to exist and these assertions to circulate throughout the country. They make use of them for the purpose of seizing on a time of popular delusion to add to the Navy and to the expenditure of the country. Instead of that, if they were to tell the people the truth, and to lay before them the real state of the facts, which they know—which I am convinced that they know—which to my certain knowledge their own officers send to them from Paris,—they might have saved millions during the last few years. There is not a man in Paris, whether Bonapartist, Orleanist, or Republican, who does not entirely disbelieve and disavow all the statements made in this House and this country as to the gigantic naval preparations of France, and the disposition of its Government towards England. Surely, after what was done in consequence of the panic excited when the right hon. member for Droitwich (Sir John Pakington) was at the Admiralty, and considering that this is a time of peculiar pressure, when a general discontent is arising in different parts of the country at this enormous expenditure, the Government might easily have reduced the military estimates of the year by four or five millions! And I do not believe there is a man in the kingdom, with the slightest knowledge of politics, who could imagine that we were not quite as safe as we shall be when all this money has been voted.' Mr. Bright added that Lord Palmerston, who had disappointed the country and his supporters in that House in some things, might with credit to his Government and satisfaction to the country have touched the estimates with a bolder hand.

In his reply, Lord Palmerston could only plead the necessity for keeping our navy ahead of that of the French, but this was sufficient at the time for a House, excited by the alleged enormous increase in the French navy, and the money was voted by a large majority.

CHAPTER III.

AMERICA AND THE CIVIL WAR.

Mr. Bright and the United States.—Secession of Southern States.—Outbreak of the Civil War.—Neutrality of England.—The affair of the *Trent*.—Surrender of Messrs. Slidell and Mason.—Mr. Bright on the American Struggle.—The Duty of England.—The Cotton Famine.—Debate on the Affair of the *Trent*.—The Condition of International Law.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Speech on the War and the Supply of Cotton.—He justifies the Policy of the North.—Slavery and the South.—Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.—Speeches of Messrs. Scholefield and Bright.—Meeting at Rochdale.—Northern Sympathy with the Distress in Lancashire.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—Meeting on the American Question in 1863.—Mr. Bright at St. James's Hall.—At the London Tavern.—Debates in the House of Commons.—Mr. Roebuck's Motion for recognizing the Southern Confederacy.—Eloquent Speech by Mr. Bright.—Public Breakfast to Mr. Lloyd Garrison.—A noble band of Abolitionists.—Appreciation of Mr. Bright's Defence of the Northern Cause.—President Lincoln's Staff bequeathed to Mr. Bright.

No statesman of eminence has ever spoken in such unstintedly generous terms of the United States as Mr. Bright. He has watched the growth and development of the American Union with peculiar interest; and from the tenor of his convictions and opinions, he has naturally regarded with admiration the free institutions of that great Republic. But he has done more than this. Mr. Bright was the steadfast friend of America in the moment of her deepest peril; and when many English statesmen were predicting the dissolution of the Union at the time of the Civil War, Mr. Bright never lost faith in the future of America, but stood forward as the uncompromising champion of the cause of the North. We know now how that struggle ended; although the North fought in the outset for union, and not emancipation, yet, had the South been victorious, the hateful institution of slavery would still be flourishing, and the triumph of freedom might have been delayed for many generations.

The shadow of the coming struggle between the Northern and Southern portions of the United States was felt before the commencement of the year 1861. Towards the close of the preceding year South Carolina had led the way in seceding from the Union, and in the course of two or three weeks her example was followed by Mississippi and several other impor-

tant States. The conflict now began. The attitude of England was regarded with keen interest, but the Government discountenanced debates which might tend to compromise the neutrality of the country. On being consulted, the law officers of the Crown decided that the Southern States must be treated as belligerent. It was resolved, however, that the policy of England should remain strictly neutral, and in May, 1861, a proclamation was issued announcing such neutrality, and forbidding all British subjects from aiding either side, directly or indirectly. Orders were issued to prohibit armed ships of the belligerents from carrying their prizes into any British port; and it was resolved to despatch a force of three thousand men for the protection of Canada. Even at this early period there were those in England who called for the recognition of the Confederate States, and much excitement prevailed throughout the country. Speaking at a meeting at Rochdale on the 1st of August, Mr. Bright referred to the loss of cotton as a result of the war, and said that the safety of the product on which the county of Lancashire depended rested far more on the success of the Washington Government than upon its failure. On the general question, he held that the Union must be maintained; and observed that the people of England, if they were true to their sympathies, to their own history, and to their great act of 1834, would have no sympathy with those who desired to build up a great empire on the perpetual bondage of millions of their fellow-men.

On the 7th of November, 1861, an incident occurred which nearly led to a war between England and the United States. It appeared that the *Trent*, a packet belonging to the British Mail Steamship Company, and being therefore a neutral vessel, had taken on board at Havannah (a neutral port) four passengers who were envoys from the Confederate States to London and Paris. They embarked, however, simply as private passengers. On the date above mentioned the ship was stopped in the old Bahama Channel by the United States' steamer *San Jacinto*, commanded by Captain Wilkes, who demanded to see the list of the passengers. This was refused, and he then announced that his orders were to take Messrs. Slidell and Mason, and their companions, who were known to be on board. They were taken by force on board the *San Jacinto*, in spite of their own protest and that of the British Admiralty agent, Commander Williams, R.N. A curious international question arose, and war was imminent between the two countries; but eventually the Commissioners were surrendered, when it was

found that the British Government would accept no compromise. Great irritation ensued on both sides, but the prospect of war happily passed away.

At this time Mr. Bright attended a banquet given to him by his fellow-townsmen of Rochdale, who were anxious for an exposition of his opinions on the civil war generally, and on the duty of England in respect thereto. Having made acknowledgment of the kindness of his reception, Mr. Bright remarked upon the war struggles which had recently taken place in Europe, and then said: 'Now our eyes are turned in a contrary direction, and we look to the West. There we see a struggle in progress of the very highest interest to England and to humanity at large. We see there a nation which I shall call the Transatlantic English nation—the inheritor and partaker of all the historic glories of this country. We see it torn with intestine broils, and suffering from calamities from which for more than a century past—in fact, for more than two centuries past—this country has been exempt. That struggle is of especial interest to us. We remember the description which one of our great poets gives of Rome,—

"Lone mother of dead empires."

But England is the living mother of great nations on the American and on the Australian continents, which promise to endow the world with all her knowledge and all her civilization, and even with something more than the freedom she herself enjoys.'

He then traced the progress of the United States, and the history of the slave question, and showed, from the superior position and advantages of the Southern States in the Union, that the present insurrection was a wicked one. The maintenance of a high tariff was not the cause of the revolt; it was really the question of slavery. For thirty years it had constantly been coming to the surface, disturbing social life, and overthrowing almost all political harmony in the working of the United States. The object of the South was to escape from the majority, who wished to limit the area of slavery. The Slave States offered themselves for the recognition of a Christian nation, based upon the foundation, the unchangeable foundation in their eyes, of slavery and barbarism.

What was the course which England would be expected to pursue? We should be neutral as far as regards mingling in the strife. We were neutral in the strife in Italy, but we were not neutral in opinion and sympathy; and the feeling in Italy was that the opinion of England was potent in Europe,

and did much for the creation of the Italian kingdom. Mr. Bright spoke with commendation of the speeches of the Duke of Argyll and Lord Stanley on the question of neutrality. Lord John Russell, too, had spoken out; but there were other speeches made to which he would not refer, out of pity for the men who uttered them. Coming to the press, he instanced the *Times* as not having, since Mr. Lincoln took office, published one fair and honourable and friendly article on American affairs. Now, he had never stood forth as the advocate of war, but on this question it was well that principles should be understood. The *Times* advocated separation in America; but if an insurrection arose in Ireland, it would describe with glee and exultation the manner in which the insurrectionists were cut down and made an end of. Mr. Bright wanted to know whether it had ever been admitted by politicians, or statesmen, or people, that a great nation could be broken up at any time by any particular section of any part of that nation; and he went on to show, from a survey of the American States, the impossibility of secession being tolerated. Dealing with another argument of which we heard much, Mr. Bright said there could not be a meaner motive than that it was better for ourselves that the United States should be severed, and that the North American continent should be as the continent of Europe is, in many States, and subject to all the contentions and disasters which have accompanied the history of the States of Europe. 'I should say that, if a man had a great heart within him, he would rather look forward to the day when, from that point of land which is habitable nearest to the Pole, to the shores of the Great Gulf, the whole of that vast continent might become one grand confederation of States,—without a great army, and without a great navy,—not mixing itself up with the entanglements of European politics,—without a custom-house inside, through the whole length and breadth of its territory,—and with freedom everywhere, equality everywhere, law everywhere, peace everywhere,—such a confederation would afford at least some hope that man is not forsaken of Heaven, and that the future of our race may be better than the past.' It was said that the Americans were irritable, which was very likely, seeing that they were involved in a great struggle, the like of which had not been before in their or in any history. No country in the world was ever more entitled to sympathy and forbearance than the United States at that moment. We had papers endeavouring to poison the mind of England against the North; and they had papers,

like the *New York Herald*, endeavouring to provoke mischief between the Government in Washington and the Government in London.

Mr. Bright next referred to the discourtesy of our Foreign Minister towards Mr. Adams, the American representative, in not delaying until his arrival the issue of the proclamation of neutrality, so that it might at least have seemed a friendly act, and thus have obviated all the unpleasantness which had occurred. He was obliged to say that there had not been that friendly and cordial neutrality on the part of England which he should have expected had he been a citizen of the United States. With regred to the affair of the *Trent*, Mr. Bright pronounced the act both impolitic and bad, though he did not understand the law, which was very unsettled. 'I think it may turn out, almost certainly, that, so far as the taking of those men from that ship was concerned, it was an act wholly unknown to, and unauthorized by, the American Government. And if the American Government believe, on the opinion of their law officers, that the act is illegal, I have no doubt they will make fitting reparation; for there is no Government in the world that has so strenuously insisted upon modifications of international law, and been so anxious to be guided always by the most moderate and merciful interpretation of that law.'

But Mr. Bright begged Englishmen to be calm on this matter, to take no notice of those who clamoured for war before we had heard a word from the American Government, and to remember how we were dragged into the Russian war. The hon. gentleman then brought his address to this effective conclusion:—

'At this very moment, then, there are millions in the United States who personally, or whose immediate parents, have at one time been citizens of this country. They found a home in the Far West; they subdued the wilderness; they met with plenty there, which was not afforded them in their native country; and they have become a great people. There may be persons in England who are jealous of those States; there may be men who dislike democracy, and who hate a republic; there may be even those whose sympathies warm towards the slave oligarchy of the South; but of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross, or calumny the most wicked, can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren beyond the Atlantic.

'Now, whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South achieve an unhonoured independence or not, I know not, and I predict not. But this I think I know—that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of freemen in the North will be thirty millions or even fifty millions—a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray that it may not be said amongst them that, in the darkest hour

of their country's trials, England, the land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness, and saw unmoved the perils and calamities of their children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am but one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this country; if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and which tends to generous thoughts, and generous words, and generous deeds, between the two great nations who speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name.'

Mr. Bright had prophesied the cotton famine in 1847, and again in 1850, and alluded to this when he spoke at a banquet of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce on the 4th of February, 1862. 'It was no long-sightedness,' he observed, 'to say or to see what would result, for I took it for granted every man must have known that, in a country the constitution of which declared as its cardinal point that all men are equal, the institution of slavery, by one means or other, must at some period come to an end, and that the organization of labour in the Southern States of America must at least for a time be interfered with, if not wholly broken up.' He therefore recommended that we should turn our attention to India, with the view of extending the growth there; but nothing had been done. As a natural consequence, the collapse of the cotton supply was now terribly felt in Lancashire. Half a million workmen in Lancashire were deprived of support. The widespread distress, however, was nobly borne; and the Cotton Famine Fund, which was now inaugurated, testified to the great and spontaneous liberality of all classes. The calamity called forth the heroism and endurance and all the finer qualities of the working population of Lancashire, and their demeanour in this unparalleled crisis elicited the warmest admiration at home and abroad.

The affair of the *Trent* was of course discussed in the House of Commons in the session of 1862, and Mr. Bright took the opportunity of expressing his opinion upon the conduct of Her Majesty's Government in reference to that affair. He commented on the great inconsistency between the despatches of the Foreign Office and the preparations of certain other departments with regard to the recent transaction. 'It is not customary,' he said, 'in ordinary life, for a person to send a messenger with a polite message to a friend, or a neighbour, or acquaintance, and at the same time to send a man of portentous strength, wielding a gigantic club, and making every kind of ferocious gesticulation, and still to profess that all this is done in the most friendly and courteous manner.' Such, however, had been the conduct of our Government; 'and the result was

that a million of money had been wasted—more than wasted,—for the general paralysis, throughout all the ramifications of our commerce, caused by the warlike preparations of the Government, had already been productive of the most pernicious results. The affair of the *Trent* was nothing but an unhappy accident, and no one knew that better than Lord Palmerston himself.

The Premier replied to the effect that if he had pocketed the insult, a feeling of ineradicable irritation would have been produced in this country, which would have been far more dangerous to the prospects of peace than any feelings engendered by the recent conduct of the Government. There the matter dropped; but some time later Mr. Horsfall brought forward a resolution, 'That the present state of international maritime law, as affecting the rights of belligerents and neutrals, is ill-defined and unsatisfactory, and calls for the early attention of Her Majesty's Government.' The motion was opposed by the Attorney-General, who regarded the law as quite clear and well understood. Mr. Bright observed that the motion had been drawn up in its present form in order that the Government might accept it, for it did not pledge them to anything, but left them to take whatever proceedings they might think advisable hereafter. The Government had been blamed for the course they took in 1856; but he was of opinion that it was necessary and proper, and could not be avoided. But under the Declaration of Paris great injury would result to belligerents in time of war. We had agreed to make war less burdensome to ourselves and to an enemy, but we had done it in such a manner as to inflict very grievous injury upon a great and important class. What did Mr. Horsfall propose?—to include the ship as well as the goods,—a proposition which logically followed the other, and the effect of which would be to render war remote and unfrequent. Arguing from the vast number of captures of British vessels in the short war with America in 1812–14, when our tonnage was only 3,500,000, Mr. Bright asked what would be the injury to British commerce when our tonnage had grown to twelve or thirteen millions. It would not be possible to resist this proposition ultimately, and other countries were already in favour of it. After a lengthy debate, the motion was withdrawn, Mr. Horsfall expressing himself satisfied with the discussion it had elicited.

The two great and pressing questions, the war and the supply of cotton, were dealt with very fully by Mr. Bright in a speech delivered at Birmingham on the 18th of December,

1862. He began by an inquiry into the growth of cotton in India, showing that in 1818 the quantity we received from the East actually exceeded that which we received from the United States. But after that there was a great decay in the cotton trade of Western India, and he had moved for an inquiry into the subject. 'My argument is this, and my assertion is this,' said Mr. Bright, 'that the growth of cotton in India,—the growth of an article which was native and common in India before America was discovered by Europeans,—that the growth of that article has been systematically injured, strangled, and destroyed by the stupid and wicked policy of the Indian Government.' But although Parliamentary committees had sat, and evidence had been taken entirely condemnatory of the whole system of the Indian Government with regard to the land and agricultural produce, nothing had been done. The hon. gentleman detailed at length the strenuous efforts he had made for many years in connection with this question, and again expressed an opinion he had before uttered in the House of Commons, that there should be five or six independent Presidencies in India, with a first-class engineer in each Presidency, and an efficient staff whose business it should be to determine what public works should be carried on, some by the Government and some by private companies. He believed that ten years of such judicious labours would work an entire revolution in the condition of India.

What was now their present position? The quantity of cotton in the United States was much less than people believed, and there was a high probability that there would never be another considerable crop, or one available for the English manufactories, from slave labour in America. All other sources of supply, except India, could not send us the enormous quantity which would be required if the crop from the United States failed. If the Government would exempt from the land tax for a period all land in India which during that time should grow cotton, the stimulus would be enormous. The loss to the revenue would be something, but the deliverance to Lancashire would perhaps be complete. Short of this, he looked upon the restoration of the prosperity of Lancashire as distant.

Mr. Bright next spoke of the sad tragedy passing before the eyes of the people in the United States. He rapidly sketched the course of public opinion in England from the moment when the secession of the Cotton States was announced. At first feeling was against the South; then, when it was said the North

was paralyzed and unprepared, it was thought that the North would acquiesce in the rending of the Republic, and that there would be no war. Public writers also in this country said that the contest was hopeless. He (Mr. Bright) justified the North. President Lincoln was fairly and honestly elected, and after the raising of a hundred thousand men, and other steps taken by the Southern leaders, the President was justified in calling out seventy-five thousand men for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of that nation, which was the main purpose of the oath he had taken at his election. As to the object of the war, no man could doubt that the South began it on their part to maintain in bondage four millions of human beings. He wanted to ask, therefore, whether this was to be the foundation, as proposed, of a new slave empire, and whether it was intended that on this audacious and infernal basis England's new ally was to be built up. 'I want to know who they are who speak eagerly in favour of England becoming the ally and friend of this great conspiracy against human nature.' It was not that he had an objection to recognize a country because it held slaves; but in this case it was a new State setting itself up on the sole basis of slavery. Slavery was blasphemously declared to be its chief corner-stone. Ministers of State, the aristocracy, and others, were divided on this question, but the great body of the people of this country would never sympathize with a revolt which was intended to destroy the liberty of a continent, and to build on its ruins a mighty fabric of human bondage. Mr. Bright again replied to the argument that the Republic was too great and too powerful for us, and that the North did not like us. With regard to the *Alabama*, having gone into the facts he did not so much blame the language that had been used in America in reference to that matter. Every effort that money and malice could make to stimulate in Lancashire, amongst the suffering population, an expression of opinion in favour of the Slave States had failed. Mr. Bright closed with this eloquent peroration, which is justly regarded as one of his finest and happiest efforts:—

'I blame men who are eager to admit into the family of nations a State which offers itself to us, based upon a principle, I will undertake to say, more odious and more blasphemous than was ever heretofore dreamed of in Christian or Pagan, in civilized or in savage times. The leader of this revolt proposes this monstrous thing—that over a territory forty times as large as England, the blight and curse of slavery shall be for ever perpetuated. I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will befall that fair land, stricken though it now is with the ravages of war. I cannot believe that civilization, in its

journey with the sun, will sink into endless night in order to gratify the ambition of the leaders of this revolt, who seek to

> "Wade through slaughter to a throne,
> And shut the gates of mercy on mankind."

I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main,—and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and, over all that wide continent, the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime.'

The second anniversary dinner of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce was held on the 15th of January, 1863, and both members for the borough were present. Mr. Scholefield advocated the practice of capturing the unarmed vessels of a belligerent, on the grounds that such a proceeding checked war, by enlisting mercantile interests against it; and, moreover, that such a practice crippled an enemy's resources, thereby bringing war to a speedy termination. The senior member also described the emancipation proclamation of President Lincoln as 'a gigantic confiscation of property,' alleging that it came within the same category as the prize capture of merchant vessels. Mr. Bright, in following Mr. Scholefield, referred first to the unsatisfactory condition of international law. We ought to look forward, with a view to progress, rather than to make a retrograde step in the interpretation of international law as between belligerents. On this question, and also on the question of blockade, his opinion was that it was the interest of all nations, and especially of England, to render their military policy more humane and more in accordance with the moral code. England was the only power that opposed these alterations. After alluding to our proposed cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece, and to the growth of a sound opinion throughout the world upon international rights, Mr. Bright said, with perhaps pardonable egotism, 'Many things which I advocate are thought rather foolish at first, but in time people come up to them, and I have the satisfaction of being a little ahead of the Government, and often of the nation.' Discussing the question of Gibraltar, to which he had alluded on a previous occasion, the hon. gentleman said that it would surely be a great advantage to us to have a close ally and friend in Spain; but that we could never have, so long as we held a portion of her territory, taken from her and kept from her under circumstances reflecting no honour upon England, especially when it

was almost universally admitted that the Rock was of no use whatever to ourselves. Mr. Bright next alluded to the suffering in Lancashire, expressing his pleasure that the working men of Birmingham had subscribed £3,000 towards the Relief Fund. He was only sorry that every one of the men who thus nobly subscribed had not his name on the register of electors, and was not enabled to give his free vote at the poll. He then showed, with regard to the paralysis in the cotton industry, and the consumption of all the cotton that was available except that which was locked up in the United States, that an immediate armistice and the cessation of the war with a view to negotiations would produce a great fall and a great ruin. This apprehension necessarily interfered very much with the course of business. Mr. Gladstone's speech at Newcastle, and the Foreign Minister's speech in connection with the war, had exercised a disastrous influence; and then there was the incessant folly and malice poured out every day in the columns of the *Times*. But notwithstanding all, the world was moving on. 'I see from the East unto the West,' he remarked, 'from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, in spite of what misled, prejudiced, unjust, and wicked men may do, the cause of freedom still moving onward; and it is not in human power to arrest its progress. There was much to be done in our own country, but if men examined questions fairly, and decided upon them truthfully, shunning party spirit, we might have hope that we should do much to elevate our people, to improve our institutions, to make broader and safer the foundations of our freedom, and to build up and preserve a commonwealth which should do much to help forward the advancement of the world.'

A few days after the delivery of this speech, Mr. Bright attended a meeting at Rochdale, called by the Mayor, Mr. G. L. Ashworth, for the purpose of passing resolutions of thanks to the merchants and citizens of New York for their sympathy with the sufferings of the unemployed workpeople of Lancashire, and for their munificent contributions to the Relief Fund. Mr. Bright said, 'I regard this transmission of assistance from the United States as a proof that the world moves onward in the direction of a better time. It is an evidence that, whatever may be the faults of ambitious men, and sometimes, may I not say, the crimes of Governments, the peoples are drawing together, and beginning to learn that it never was intended that they should be hostile to each other, but that every nation should take a brotherly interest in every other nation in the world.' There was a little jealousy between some persons in

our own country and some portions of the people in the United States? But why should this be? Their language and literature were the same; their laws had the same basis as ours; their form of Government was not very dissimilar in essence from our own constitution, though our House of Commons was not as full and fair and free a representation of the people as was the House of Representatives at Washington. The influence of the great example of the United States had been perceptible in Europe. Touching upon the great emigration from this country to America, Mr. Bright said there was not much hope in England for the workman, whereas in the United States hope prevailed everywhere; 'everywhere there is an open career; there is no privileged class; there is complete education extended to all; and every man feels that he is not born to be in penury and in suffering, but that there is no point in the social ladder to which he may not fairly hope to raise himself by his honest efforts.'

But that country was now the scene of one of the greatest calamities that could afflict mankind; and he showed that the question which was being tried was not merely whether four millions of slaves in America should be free, but whether the vast number of slaves in Cuba and Brazil should also be liberated. But further, the freedom of men of all races was involved in this great strife, and Mr. Bright cited extracts from Southern writers and speakers to prove that the freedom of white men even was not safe in the hands of the Southerners. He reiterated his opinion, based upon Southern utterances as regarded slavery, that the great strife had its origin in an infamous conspiracy against the rights of human nature. Their doctrine was the doctrine of devils, and not of men; and all mankind should shudder at the enormity of the guilt which the leaders of the conspiracy had brought upon that country.

Mr. Bright went on to show, from the papers of the South, that both before and after the secession the universal opinion of the Southerners was that the stoppage of the supply of cotton would be our instantaneous ruin, and that if they could only lay hold of it, keep it back in the country or burn it, so that it never could be used, that then the people of Lancashire—merchants, manufacturers, and operatives in mills—everybody dependent upon this vast industry—would immediately arise and protest against the English Government abstaining for one moment from the recognition of the South, from war with the North, and from a resolution to do the utmost that we could to create a slave-holding independent re-

public in the South. These men had sent their envoys to this country, and the latter had been received by some as though they came from the most honourable Government, and with the most honourable mission. Slave-owners, buyers, sellers, and breeders asked Englishmen—Englishmen with a history of freedom—to join hands in their atrocious conspiracy. Some of our statesmen and some of our newspapers had been wrong upon this question; but the working men of England, and the great body of the middle classes too, had not been wrong. Witness the great meetings in London, Manchester and elsewhere. Public opinion had not changed, but men were learning more about it every day. What shall we say with regard to this great question? asked Mr. Bright; and he furnished the answer in this eloquent passage, which formed the conclusion of his address:—

'I do not believe it is possible to be strictly, coldly neutral. The question at issue is too great, the contest is too grand in the eye of the world. It is impossible for any man who can have an opinion worth anything on any question not to have some kind of an opinion on the question of this war. I am not ashamed of my opinion, or the sympathy which I feel, and have over and over again expressed, on the side of the free North. I cannot understand how any man witnessing what is enacting on the American continent can indulge in small cavils against the free people of the North, and close his eyes entirely to the enormity of the purposes of the South. I cannot understand how any Englishman, who in past years has been accustomed to say that "there was one foul blot upon the fair fame of the American Republic," can now express any sympathy for those who would perpetuate and extend that blot. And, more, if we profess to be, though it be with imperfect and faltering steps, the followers of Him who declared it to be His Divine mission "to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," must we not reject with indignation and scorn the proffered alliance and friendship with a power based on human bondage, and which contemplates the overthrow and the extinction of the dearest rights of the most helpless of mankind?

'If we are the friends of freedom, personal and political,—and we all profess to be so, and most of us, more or less, are striving after it more completely for our own country,—how can we withhold our sympathy from a Government and a people amongst whom white men have always been free, and who are now offering an equal freedom to the black? I advise you not to believe in the "destruction" of the American nation. If facts should happen by any chance to force you to believe it, do not commit the crime of wishing it. I do not blame men who draw different conclusions from mine from the facts, and who believe that the restoration of the Union is impossible. As the facts lie before our senses, so must we form a judgment on them. But I blame those men who wish for such a catastrophe. For myself, I have never despaired, and I will not despair. In the language of one of our old poets, who wrote, I think, more than three hundred years ago, I will not despair,—

"For I have seen a ship in haven fall,
After the storm had broke both mast and shroud."

From the very outburst of this great convulsion, I have had but one hope and

one faith, and it is this—that the result of this stupendous strife may be to make freedom the heritage for ever of a whole continent, and that the grandeur and the prosperity of the American Union may never be impaired.

There was no cessation of the meetings, either in the metropolis or the provinces, on the American question. On the 20th of March, a meeting of the Trades Unionists of London was held in St. James's Hall, to express sympathy with the Northern States of America, and in furtherance of the cause of negro emancipation. Mr. Bright presided, and was supported by Mr. Stansfeld, M. P., Mr. P. A. Taylor, M. P., Mr. John Stuart Mill, Professor Beesly, the Rev. Newman Hall, and others. In the course of his opening speech, Mr. Bright said that some persons and some writers thought it no great matter which had caused this contest in the United States. He maintained that a whole continent was at stake, with its teeming millions, and their present and future fate. What were the sympathies of England, and especially what was the interest in this contest of the men before him? Privilege, with blatant voice, had cursed the American Republic; privilege had beheld an affecting spectacle for many years past. 'It has beheld,' continued Mr. Bright, 'thirty millions of men, happy and prosperous, without emperor, without king, without the surroundings of a court, without nobles, except such as are made by eminence in intellect and virtue, without State bishops and State priests,—

"Sole vendors of the lore which works salvation,"—

without great armies and great navies, without great debt and without great taxes. Privilege has shuddered at what might happen to old Europe if this grand experiment should succeed. But you, the workers,—you, striving after a better time,—you, struggling upwards towards the light, with slow and painful steps,—you have no cause to look with jealousy upon a country which, amongst all the great nations of the globe, is that one where labour has met with the highest honour, and where it has reaped its greatest reward. Are you aware of the fact that in fifteen years, which is but as yesterday when it is past, two and a half millions of your countrymen have found a home in the United States,—that a population equal nearly, if not quite, to the population of this great city—itself equal to no mean kingdom—has emigrated from these shores? In the United States there has been, as you know, an open door for every man,—and millions have entered into it, and have found rest.'

After comparing the two sections of the United States engaged in the struggle, the speaker remarked that the whole question was one most fitting for discussion by the trade societies of London. It was said that trade would be ruined; but if the South began the war, could we be their friends? If they had destroyed cotton, or withheld it, could we therefore take them to our bosoms? Cotton had been withheld from this country with the single object of creating in the manufacturing districts of France and England a state of suffering that might at last become unbearable, and thus compel the Governments of those countries to take sides with the South against the North. He was sorry to believe that many Englishmen had taken portions of the loan being raised on behalf of the Southern Confederacy, whose great object was to pay in this country for such vessels as the *Alabama*. It was hoped that so much irritation would arise in consequence in the minds of the people of the Northern States that England might be dragged into war to take sides with the South and with slavery. Mr. Bright held that the question was so plain that most Englishmen must understand it, and in concluding said: 'I wish you to be true to yourselves. Dynasties may fall, aristocracies may perish, privilege will vanish into the dim past; but you, your children, and your children's children, will remain, and from you the English people will be continued to succeeding generations. You wish the freedom of your country. You wish it for yourselves. You strive for it in many ways. Do not then give the hand of fellowship to the worst foes of freedom that the world has ever seen; and do not, I beseech you, bring down a curse upon your cause which no after-penitence can ever lift from it. You will not do this. I have faith in you. Impartial history will tell that, when your statesmen were hostile or coldly neutral, when many of your rich men were corrupt, when your press—which ought to have instructed and defended—was mainly written to betray, the fate of a continent and of its vast population being in peril, you clung to freedom with an unfaltering trust that God in His infinite mercy will yet make it the heritage of all His children.'

Another public meeting was held on the 16th of June, at the London Tavern, convened by the Union and Emancipation Society, the object being to hear an address from Mr. M. D. Conway. Mr. Bright took the chair, and spoke at some length upon the war, tracing the course of English feeling in regard to it. With respect to the supply of cotton, he said that we

had been carrying on a prodigious industry upon a most insecure foundation. He maintained that with a supply of cotton mainly derived from the Southern States, and raised by slave labour, two things were indisputable—first, that the supply must always be insufficient; and, secondly, that it must always be insecure. He adduced facts and statistics in support of these positions. The slave power had now rushed into the battle-field to settle this great question; and having chosen war, it was from day to day sinking to inevitable ruin under it. Was it not possible that the vast cotton industry of Lancashire, with all its interests of capital and labour, which had hitherto been standing on a menacing volcano, might hereafter be placed upon a rock which nothing could disturb? Again, with regard to the United States, once abolish slavery in the South, and the whole of the country would be open to the enterprise and the industry of all. There would be a migration from the North to the beautiful regions of the South. In the course of ten years there would be a rapid increase in the growth of cotton; and not only would its growth be rapid, but its permanent increase would be secured. Mr. Bright expressed a hope that in future all who loved freedom here would hold converse with all who loved freedom in America, and that the two nations, which came of one stock, might be united in soul, and work together for the advancement of the liberties and the happiness of mankind.

But Mr. Bright never spoke with greater force or more earnest emphasis on this important and, at the time, all-absorbing question, than he did in the House of Commons on the occasion of Mr. Roebuck's motion for the recognition of the Southern Confederacy, which was brought forward on the 30th of June, 1863. The mover of this resolution had shown himself a bitter enemy of the North, and in pressing the House of Commons to adopt his motion, he said his only fear was lest the independence of the South should be established without us. As far as his influence went, he was determined to do all he could to prevent the reconstruction of the Union. Lord Palmerston being absent from the House in consequence of indisposition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gladstone) defended the policy of the Government, and said that, although he was most anxious that the contest in America should be brought to an end, he did not believe recognition of the South would accomplish it, while it would produce reaction in the North.

Mr. Bright's speech was one of the finest displays of almost

impromptu oratory ever listened to in the House of Commons. It was alike remarkable in sarcasm and in eloquence of a very lofty order, and it absolutely tore Mr. Roebuck's address into tatters. The speaker's denunciation of Mr. Roebuck himself, also, was a thing never to be forgotten by those who listened to it. Mr. Bright first took up the story of Mr. Roebuck's interview with the Emperor of the French, observing that he asked us to accept that Sovereign's lead on one of the greatest questions ever submitted to the British Parliament. He went on to show that Mr. Roebuck had not always had this friendly regard for the French Emperor, but had on more than one occasion denounced his bad faith. Though the hon. and learned gentleman had been laughed at, he still adopted the patriotic character of 'Tear 'em,' and was still at his post. If he (Mr. Bright) was not mistaken, Mr. Roebuck had once said, referring to the salutation between the Emperor of the French and the Queen of these kingdoms, 'I saw his perjured lips touch that hallowed cheek.'

'France,' continued Mr. Bright, 'if not wise in this matter, is at least not unfriendly. The hon. and learned member, in my opinion—indeed I am sure—is not friendly, and I believe he is not wise.' The speaker then grew sarcastic upon the revelations of policy made by these new Ministers, these envoys most extraordinary (Mr. Roebuck and Mr. W. S. Lindsay), in connection with the Emperor Napoleon. In his (Mr. Bright's) opinion, Mr. Roebuck would help to break up a friendly nation, and create an everlasting breach between the two nations, because he deemed it for the interest of England. Coming to the proposition made, the hon. member for Birmingham affirmed that the whole case rested either upon a miserable jealousy or a base fear. There was never a state in the world which was less capable of aggression with regard to Europe than the United States of America. Besides, the party which had elected Mr. Lincoln to office was a moral and peaceable party—while the hon. gentleman would throw the weight of England into the scale in favour of the cause of slavery- He (the speaker) looked at the interest of England from a different point of view. He believed the war was likely more than anything else to abolish slavery. The supply of cotton under the system of slavery must always be insecure; and it was the interest of England that the supply of cotton should be by free labour rather than by that of slaves. With regard to the political aspect of the question, the more he considered this war, the more improbable he thought it that the United States would be

broken up into separate republics. The conclusion to which he had come was that, if there should be a separation, the interests, the sympathies, and the necessities, perhaps the ambition of the whole continent, were such that it would be reunited under a central government. It was possible that they might prefer the union of their whole country upon the basis of the South, and then we should have a great State built up upon slavery and war, instead of that free State to which he looked, built up upon an educated people, upon general freedom, and upon morality in government.

Mr. Bright next spoke upon the morality of the question and the horrors of war. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had referred to the carnage which was occasioned by this lamentable strife; but carnage was the accompaniment of all war, and more lives had been lost during the invasion of the Crimea than had hitherto been lost in the American war. Then followed this passage, one of the most stirring and pathetic in all the speeches of Mr Bright:—

'Now I will ask the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and those who are of opinion with him on this question of slaughter in the American war—a slaughter which I hope there is no hon. member here, and no person out of this House, that does not in his calm moments look upon with grief and horror—to consider what was the state of things before the war. It was this: that every year in the Slave States of America there were born into the world one hundred and fifty thousand children—born with the badge and the doom of slavery—born to the liability by law, and by custom, and by the devilish cupidity of man—to the lash and to the chain and to the branding-iron, and to be taken from their families and carried they know not where.

'I want to know whether you feel as I feel upon this question. When I can get down to my home from this House, I find half a dozen little children playing upon my hearth. How many members are there who can say with me, that the most innocent, the most pure, the most holy joy which in their past years they have felt, or in their future years they have hoped for, has not arisen from contact and association with our precious children? Well, then if that be so—if, when the hand of death takes one of those flowers from our dwelling, our heart is overwhelmed with sorrow and our household is covered with gloom, what would it be if our children were brought up to this infernal system—one hundred and fifty thousand of them every year brought into the world in these Slave States, amongst these "gentlemen," amongst this "chivalry," amongst these men that we can make our friends?'

'Do you forget the thousandfold griefs and the countless agonies which belonged to the silent conflict of slavery before the war began? It is all very well for the hon. and learned gentleman to tell me, to tell this House—he will not tell the country with any satisfaction to it—that slavery, after all, is not so bad a thing. The brother of my hon. friend the member for South Durham told me that in North Carolina he himself saw a woman whose every child, ten in number, had been sold when they grew up to the age at which they would fetch a price to their master.'

Mr. Bright proceeded to observe that nothing had been heard that night of the Proclamation of the President of the

United States. "In our State we had not country in what was called the United States, but our President, our governor, legislature and our law." Lincoln was no President there, and so far as we were concerned, President Lincoln's Proclamation was a legal and effective document. It was against a Government like that of the North, as such a contest, and with such a foe, that Mr. Gladstone asked the House to throw into the scale the weight of the position of England. "We know the cause of the revolt," said Mr. Bright, finally, "to be gain and to some Those who made it were not left in a darkness respecting the decisions on what they are to accomplish or will hinder them one night; and I will almost say, as I have always discussed with regard to it, from pondering what is to come. I know what I hope for and what I shall rejoice in; but I know nothing of future here that will enable me to express a confident opinion. Whether it will give freedom to the race which alone has been enslaved on the land, and whether the hand will part a region devoted to crime established against that race in every city in the Empire. In the hands are also the issues of men and the life of Europe. I am willing to entrust to Him the issue of this dreadful contest, but I deplore this, and I lament the illness that my country may not be held responsible in all of the most stupendous act of guilt that history has recorded in the annals of mankind."

One who was present at this debate was Mr. Bright himself, an orator rather than a not Parliamentary speaker. Nothing could be more effective than the most thousand sentences in Mr. Gladstone on the five years of the fourth which digged from Mr. Bright's [illegible], and half have undergoing a process of distillation into a drought for above proof. Then he grew impatient, and went on to more positively positive. The whole address was a great manifestation of the best powers, and accepted from that point of view. It certainly completely discomfited Mr. Disraeli, discredited the opposition, and restored the adoption of the nation as impossibility. The House was adjourned to whence but when Lord Palmerston could tell Mr. Disraeli that if the Emperor of the French and the Queen of England had any communication to make to each other, they had ambassadors, who were the proper organs. Some time before the [illegible] of Mr. Gladstone's speech a letter appeared in the [illegible] in two parts of ships of war for the service of the Confederate States, in contravention of the Foreign Enlistment Act, and of the policy of neutrality adopted by England. Mr. Bright

severely blamed the Government for permitting the escape of the *Alabama*, the fitting-out of which was as notorious as the building of other vessels of war in this country for the service of the Confederates. Our neutrality, he declared, was a cold and unfriendly neutrality, or the Government would prevent the sailing of these vessels, which tended to peril our friendly relations with the United States. The unflinching attitude of the hon. member for Birmingham on the whole of the American question, gave, of course, great offence to Mr. Laird and others who sympathized with the Southern Confederacy.

We pass on from this anxious time to note one more speech of Mr. Bright on America, delivered after the great civil war had been happily concluded by the success of the Northern armies. In St. James's Hall, on the 29th of June, 1867, a public breakfast was given to William Lloyd Garrison, the well-known anti-slavery advocate. Mr. Bright presided, and passed a glowing eulogium upon the band of anti-slavery labourers in the United States. He sketched Mr. Garrison's arduous and humane career, and the journalistic and other efforts he had laboriously made on behalf of the slave. Then he alluded to Dr. Channing, John Quincy Adams, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, Horace Greeley, Lydia Maria Child, and others, as well as distinguished Southerners who had liberated their slaves, and devoted all they had to the service of freedom. Aptly applying a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Mr. Bright remarked that after the writer of the Epistle had described the great men and fathers of the nation, he said: '"Time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephtha, of David, of Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." I ask if this grand passage of the inspired writer may not be applied to that heroic band who have made America the perpetual home of freedom.'

Alluding next to the war, and to the shadow thrown over a whole continent, but which had now vanished for ever, the speaker observed, 'An ancient and renowned poet has said,

> "Unholy is the voice
> Of loud thanksgiving over slaughtered men."

It becomes us not to rejoice, but to be humbled, that a chastisement so terrible should have fallen upon any of our race; but

we may be thankful for this—that this chastisement was at least not sent in vain. The great triumph in the field was not all; there came after it another great triumph—a triumph over passion; and there came up before the world the spectacle, not of armies and military commanders, but of the magnanimity and mercy of a powerful and victorious nation. The vanquished were treated as the vanquished, in the history of the world, have never before been treated. We might now say, if history had no sadder, yet, taking a different view, it had probably also no brighter page. To Mr. Garrison more than to any other man was this due; for his was the creation of that opinion which had made slavery hateful, and had also made freedom possible in America. His name was now venerated in his own country and in Europe, and in time to come it would be the herald and the synonym of good to millions of men who now dwelt on the almost unknown continent of Africa.' Mr. Bright then referred to our own champions of freedom, Clarkson, Wilberforce, Buxton, Sturge, and Thompson; and returning, in conclusion, to the guest of the day, said: 'I have kept within my heart his name, and the names of those who have been associated with him in every step which he has taken; and in public debates in the halls of peace, and even on the blood-soiled fields of war, my heart has always been with those who were the friends of freedom. We welcome him, then, with a cordiality which knows no stint and no limit for him and for his noble associates, both men and women; and we venture to speak a verdict which, I believe, will be sanctioned by all mankind, not only by those who live now, but by those who shall come after, to whom their perseverance and their success shall be a lesson and a help in the future struggles which remain for men to make. One of our oldest and greatest poets has furnished me with a line that well expresses that verdict. Are not William Lloyd Garrison and his fellow-labourers in that world's work—are they not

"On Fame's eternal bead-roll worthy to be filled?'"

These are the utterances of Mr. Bright upon a question which divided Englishmen into passionate and hostile camps. He never swerved in his judgment upon the great issues at stake in the American civil war; and this is no light boast when we look back upon the momentous events of that terrible period, or regard the happy consolidation which has since taken place in that great nation, which speaks the same language as ourselves, and is moved by the same impulses. It was but natural

that his unwearied persistence in the cause of the North—a cause which he believed to rest on just and righteous principles —should earn for him the gratitude of the people of the United States. How deep and lasting that gratitude was, and is, may be gathered, amongst other things, from a statement made by an eminent merchant of New York, who a few years ago came upon a visit to this country. Addressing the children of Gravel Lane Ragged School, Salford, he said, 'If you were to ask in the schools of America, Who are the three men whom, as a country, we love the most? the reply would be: First, Washington, because he was the father of his country; secondly, Abraham Lincoln, because he was the saviour of his country; thirdly, John Bright, because he is the friend of our country.' During the progress of the war, and after the debate on Mr. Roebuck's motion, the members of the New York Chamber of Commerce sent to Mr. Bright, through the American Minister in London, a resolution which had been unanimously passed at one of their meetings, to the effect, 'That this Chamber desires to place on its records an expression of the grateful sense entertained by its members of the intelligent, eloquent, just, and fearless manner in which Mr. John Bright has defended, before the people of England in the British Parliament, the principles of constitutional liberty and international justice, for the maintenance of which the American people are contending, and that the proceedings be communicated to Mr. Bright.' This compliment, which was of no merely formal character, was suitably acknowledged.

But perhaps the most interesting reminiscence relating to Mr. Bright and the United States is one respecting which we are able to give the following particulars. The staff used by President Lincoln was bequeathed to Mr. Bright by the Rev. Dr. J. Smith, of Springfield, Illinois, the latter having first received it from Mr. Lincoln's family. The President's gold-headed staff, or cane, bears the following inscription on the gold head: 'J. A. M'Clernand to the Hon. A. Lincoln, June, 1857;' and on a gold ferule below are the words, 'Presented to Rev. Jas. Smith, D.D., late pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Ills., by the family of the late President Lincoln, *in memoriam* of the high esteem in which he was held by him and them as their pastor and dear friend, 27th April, 1868.' On another gold ferule, lower down, is the following: 'Bequeathed by the Rev. Dr. Smith, U. S. Consul, Dundee, to the Right Hon. John Bright, M P., in recognition of his tried friendship to the United States.'

The following is an extract from the will of Dr. Smith :—

'I give, devise, and bequeath unto John Bright, Esq., member of the British House of Commons, and to his heirs, the gold-mounted staff, or cane, which belonged to the deceased President Lincoln of the United States, and presented to me by the deceased's widow and family as a mark of the President's respect; which staff is to be kept as an heirloom in the family of the said John Bright, as a token of the esteem which the late President felt for him because of his unwearied zeal and defence of the United States in suppressing the civil rebellion of the Southern States.'

Mr. Reid, the Executor of Dr. Smith, in a note of the date of July 17, 1871, informing Mr. Bright of the bequest, says, 'I may mention that the late President's family are much pleased at Dr. Smith's bequeathing it to you, as it was the President's wish that you eventually should get it.'

There have been some moral campaigns upon which men have entered with hope and courage, whose results have not, unhappily, during the lifetime of those engaged in them, been witnessed in the furtherance of the cause of truth and freedom. But it was the good fortune of Mr. Bright, and those who laboured in the same cause, during the great American struggle, to witness the attainment of the noble ends for which they strove, viz., the liberation of the slave, and the reknitting with surer and stronger force those great national bonds which had been momentarily severed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COBDEN-DELANE CONTROVERSY.—THE LAND QUESTION.—CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, ETC.

Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright at Rochdale.—Speeches on the Land and the Labourers.—Misrepresentation by the *Times*.—Correspondence between Mr. Delane and Mr. Cobden.—Mr. Bright defends his Opinions and those of Mr. Cobden at Birmingham.—Severe strictures upon the *Times*.—The Land and the Labourers.—Evils of Primogeniture.—Effects of the Territorial System.—Proposed Reforms.—Inducements to Emigration offered by the United States.—Mr. Bright on the History of the Reformed Parliament.—Great Triumphs achieved.—Reform and Emigration—Ireland and Foreign Affairs.—Mr. Bright on the Death Punishment and Townley's Case.—Important Speech on capital Punishment.—Temperance and the Permissive Bill.—Arguments against Arbitrary Legislation.

When Mr. Cobden met his constituents at Rochdale on the 24th of February, 1863, he was accompanied by Mr. Bright, and their speeches on that occasion—which were chiefly on the subject of the English laws affecting land and labourers—led to a controversy well-known as 'the Cobden-Delane dispute.' In the course of his speech, Mr. Cobden said, 'With regard to some things in foreign countries, we don't compare favourably. You have no peasantry but that of England which is entirely divorced from the land. I don't want any agrarian outrages by which we should change all this; but this I find—and it is quite consistent with human nature—that wherever I go the condition of the people is generally pretty good, in comparison with the power they have to take care of themselves; and if you have a class entirely divorced from political power, while in another country they possess it, they will be treated there with more consideration, they will have greater advantages, they will be better educated, and have a better chance of holding property, than in a country where they are deprived of the advantage of political power.'

What Mr. Bright said at the meeting on the subject of the land was this: 'I should say, if we were fairly represented, that feudalism, with regard to the land of England, would perish, and that the agricultural labourer throughout the United Kingdom would be redeemed from that poverty and serfdom which, up to this time, have been his lot. It would

take a night, it would take a long speech, to go into the question of the condition of that unfortunate class; but with laws such as we have, which are intended to bring vast tracts of land into the possession of one man—that one man may exercise great political power—that system is a curse to the country, and dooms the agricultural labourer, I say, to perpetual poverty and degradation.'

There was nothing of a revolutionary character in this language; it was a fair and legitimate expression of opinion, however others might differ from the view put forward. But the *Times*, in commenting upon the above passages, and upon others delivered in the course of the evening, said that the language was 'calculated to excite discontent among the poor and half-informed, and had really only one intelligible meaning—"Reduce the electoral franchise; for when you have done so you will obtain an assembly which will seize on the estates of the proprietors of land, and divide them gratuitously among the poor." Mr. Cobden naturally protested against this gross misrepresentation of his views, and addressed himself direct to Mr. J. T. Delane, the editor of the *Times*, who personally assumed the responsibility of the interpretation put upon the speeches. Mr. Cobden thereupon described this interpretation as a libellous outrage upon two members of the House of Commons, and an insult to millions of honest, industrious Englishmen. 'Nobody,' he said, 'knows better than yourself, except the writer who actually penned the scandalous passage in question, that this accusation against Mr. Bright, of wishing to divide the land of the rich amongst the poor, is nothing but the resort to a stale historical trick—(this only aggravates the character of the libel) to draw away public attention from the real issue, and thus escape from the discussion of a serious but for the moment an inconvenient public topic. In order to trail a red-herring across the true scent, a cry of spoliation was raised.' Mr. Delane defended himself by saying he had never insinuated that Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright proposed to accomplish the division of land by violent means, but they had suggested that the end could be achieved by legislative measures—by giving political power to the peasantry.

The matter was not allowed to rest with this unsatisfactory and inadequate conclusion to the correspondence. On the 26th of January, 1864, Mr. Bright addressed a meeting of his constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham, and his speech on that occasion was mainly devoted to the question of the distri-

bution of land, and to a defence of the views held by Mr. Cobden and himself.

He began, however, with a reference to one or two other matters. At that time the Danish and German dispute kept Europe in a state of suspense which it was feared might end in war. Mr. Bright, happily anticipating our policy in that matter, said that any Government which would plunge this country into war under the pretence of maintaining the balance of power in Europe, and sustaining any kingdom there, little or great, was not worthy of the confidence of the people of England, but deserved their execration and abhorrence. As to a second important question, that of the recognition of the Southern Confederacy, Mr. Bright said that such recognition, if it could take place, would only exasperate still more the terrible strife existing on the North American continent, and would spread that strife even to Europe itself. He believed that in the providence of the Supreme, the slaveholder had been permitted to commit the act of suicide; and he must be worse than deaf and blind who could not see that slavery—the most odious and the most indescribable offence against man and against Heaven—was coming to a certain and rapid end.

Mr. Bright then came to the question of the Rochdale speeches. He first read the extracts and the comments from the *Times* we have given above, and then referred to the editor's defence. Next, defending Mr. Cobden and himself from the strictures of Mr. Delane, he said:—

'This is the gentleman who professes to counsel and lead the nation. Now, suppose he had charged Adam Smith, the great apostle of political economy, with approving piracy, or if he had charged John Wesley with being an encourager of drunkenness and profanity, would it have been more extraordinary than that he should charge Mr. Cobden and myself with instigating agrarian outrages and the seizure of the estates of those who now hold them, for the purpose of dividing them among the people, of course taking nothing from the people for them and therefore giving nothing to the rich for them? If there be two men in England, I will undertake to say, who have more conscientiously and more faithfully than others preached for twenty-five years the doctrines of absolute honesty with regard to political questions in England, those two men are Mr. Cobden and myself. But Mr. Cobden came forward to assail Mr. Delane when he made this charge against me. He found a man in a mask endeavouring to stab me in the back—for he had not seen that the same man had been, in a previous article, also stabbing him,—and he came forward and dragged his mask from him, and showed him to the gaze of the whole nation and of the world. And at last, after denial and equivocation of every kind, this unmasked editor of this great journal was obliged to retire from the personal part of this controversy, and to skulk back into his anonymous hiding-place, which suits him better.'

Mr. Cobden lamented, continued Mr. Bright, as he did, the

anonymous system of writing, which was inevitably a shelter for a man who had no sense of honour. There was a description of a notorious American politician which suited Mr. Delane admirably. It was said of this politician that he was a just man and a righteous man, and that he walked uprightly *before the world*, but when he was not before the world his walk was 'slantindicular.' But notwithstanding all this, the *Times* was a power in this country, and also in Europe. No one lamented more than he did that a paper once great in its independence had become—what should he say?—domesticated, for the editor of the *Times* was now domesticated in the houses of Cabinet Ministers and members of high families in London. He had learned now, when his paper might have been more useful than ever, to fetch and carry for Cambridge House.

Leaving the personal part of the question, Mr. Bright proceeded to expound his ideas upon the general subject. There were three great classes, he said, connected with land—the landowners, the tenant farmers, and the labourers. In regard to prosperity, the last-named class were at a comparatively greater distance from the landlord, and from the tenant, probably, than they were at any former period. He referred to the letters in the *Times* published under the well-known initials 'S. G. O.,' and also to certain letters in the *Star* newspaper describing the condition of the population in Buckinghamshire; but lest his audience should be unwilling to take their evidence, he cited that of the *Saturday Review*. In an article on 'Agricultural Labourers,' the writer in that journal said that when foreigners come to England and read of the condition of agricultural labourers they must be much shocked, for, he added, 'we are moved to a languid shame and sadness by thinking how true the picture is, and what *wretched, uncared-for untaught brutes* the people are who raise the crops on which we live.' And than he went on to declare of the old feudalism, which was precisely the thing he (Mr. Bright) had mentioned,' 'The old feudalism of England—the state of things when there yet were serfs, and when the lords of the soil were almost a different order of beings—still colours the relations of the rich and the poor.' After other passages showing the degraded condition of the labourer, the writer proposed as a remedy that instead of a man receiving parochial relief from the parish, he should be allowed to receive it from that larger area, the Union; and that a law which was now hardly ever put in practice should be repealed, by which a working man breaking a contract to work was treated as a felon.

Mr. Bright did not believe these remedies would be sufficient for the terrible malady described, and he asked whether it was the unchangeable law of Heaven that the agricultural population of the country should continue in their present condition. He could prove beyond all doubt, that in all those countries in Europe where the land was divided and the people had a chance of having some of it—those, in fact, who were industrious and frugal—that the condition of the agricultural and peasant population was infinitely superior to anything that was to be seen in Great Britain and Ireland. In many countries in Europe, and in the United States, the law respecting the descent of property followed what was believed to be the natural law of affection and justice between parent and children. All the property was fairly divided. What was the case in England? Personal property was divided equally, but land was given to the eldest son in one lump. 'Now, tell me whether the principle which the law of Europe for the most part wishes to enforce, that which the law of America enforces when there is no will, that which we enforce when land is not in question—whether that is not a more just law, does not approve itself more to the hearts of men, and before the eye of Heaven, than a law by which we send beggars into the world—it may be half a dozen children—that we may make one rich in the possession of unnecessary abundance?' It would be as reasonable to cut off all the younger boys and girls from all education and all freedom as it was to cut them off from their share of their father's property.

Mr. Jefferson, who filled the office of President of the United States, considered it, said Mr Bright, to be one of the greatest acts of his life when he prevailed upon the Legislature of Virginia to abolish the laws of promogeniture and entail; and in his *Life* was to be found this statement: 'The class which thus provided for the perpetuation of its wealth also monopolized the civil honours of the colony.' The effect of the distribution was to lessen the chances of a man being so enormously rich, and to give an opportunity to a larger number to become moderately so. If there were fewer coaches and six in the State of Virgina, there were twenty times as many carriages and pairs. After touching upon the question of entails, Mr. Bright continued: 'Now, may I ask you what is the political reason for which this state of things is maintained? It is for the very reason for which this system was established eight hundred years ago—that there may be in this country a handful of persons, three or four times as many as there are here—twice as many per-

haps—who are the owners of nearly all the land, in whose hands is concentrated nearly all the power, by whom the government of the country is mainly conducted, and amongst whom the patronage of the government is mainly distributed. In every country of the world, so far as I know, the possessors of land are the possessors of power.'

This point the speaker proceeded to illustrate. Our great territorial system—which was formed of a number of great properties—left the cultivator of the soil ignorant, and hopeless, and dependent, and degraded. Now, lest the Man in the Mask should misrepresent him again, he would say that he was not against great estates, or great farms, or great factories, but he had a very great liking for small estates, small farms, and small factories. Mr. Bright then indicated as follows the nature of the reforms which he desired:—

'What I propose is this—it is nothing that I have not stated before—it is the most moderate thing that can be proposed. If you want to see an admirable description of what I think it would be wise to do, you will find it in a paper which certainly is not very Radical—is rather, in my opinion, though conducted with considerable ability, conceited in some of its criticisms upon us—I mean the *Spectator*. There was an article on Saturday last in this paper on the subject of land laws in New York, and although there are only three or four lines about New York in the article, that does not matter, for it is admirably written. In one place it reads as follows: "No doubt Mr. Bright would consider this not sufficient change for the purposes he wishes." He is quite mistaken. The changes which he proposes are more extensive than any changes I have ever proposed, either in public or in private. What are these changes? First of all, that the law shall declare that when any person owning property dies without making a distribution of it by will, the law shall distribute it upon the same principle that it now adopts when it divides—I am now speaking of landed property—any other kind of property. For example: suppose a man has got money in the bank—I wish everybody had,—suppose he has machinery in his mill, merchandize in his warehouse, ships upon the ocean, or that he has shares, or the parchments for them in his safe,—if he dies, the Government by the law, or rather the law itself, makes a distribution of all that property amongst all his children, in accordance with the great universal law of natural parental affection and justice. Then, I say, let that principle be extended to all the property which a man may die possessed of; and, so far as that goes, I want no further change.

'Then, with regard to the question of entails, I would say this: the *Spectator* proposes that a man, by entailing his property—so far as I can understand—shall only prevent himself and his next heir from disposing of it; that there shall be, in point of fact, only two persons in the entail. Now, what I propose is that a man may leave his property to as many persons as he likes, to A, B, C, D, and E and F, and so on all through the alphabet, if they are all alive at the time he makes his will, and he can put all their names into it. But at present he can leave it to these people, and to a child then unborn, and who shall not be born, it may be, till twenty years after he has made his will. I would cut that off. I contend that it should be left to persons who are in existence, and whose names are in the will, and you will find that as A, B, and C died it would finally come into the hands of a man who would have the absolute disposal of it, and who could keep, or sell, or give, or waste it as he pleased.

'And I believe it will be much better for the public when that freedom of transfer is given to the possessors of land which is given to the possessors of every other kind of property. Everything which I am proposing is carried out, I believe, through most of the States in the American Union, and to a greater extent on the Continent of Europe, and is being adopted in the Australian colonies.'

The speaker then asked his audience, as reasonable men, as men of business, whether this was spoliation—whether this was agrarian outrage—whether this was stimulating the working man and the agricultural labourer to incendiarism or to something worse? Nothing of the kind. It was but laying before them those just principles of law and practice which were admitted to be just in every other country in the world than this, and which we admitted to be just with regard to everything else, except the single article of land. He and Mr. Cobden were charged with all sorts of dreadful things by the Man in the Mask, but it was really he who frightened the land-owners. As a class, the landed gentry—amongst whom, however, were some brilliant exceptions—were not a wise class. On the principles of law and of government, judging them by the past, they were dark as night itself. The landed proprietors could never find out, till Mr. Cobden and a few others told them, that the Corn Law was a great injury to them. They did not know that it actually lowered the value of their land, and diminished the security of their rents, and that it loaded them with an inconceivable amount of public odium: whilst, at the same time, it beggared hundreds and thousands of the people, and menaced this nation with rebellion. Yet for the course he and Mr. Cobden took twenty years ago they were slandered by the gentleman in the mask as they were now. The *Times* said everything that was spiteful and untrue then, as it did at that moment. And yet who could tell how much it was owing to the abolition of the Corn Laws that the Queen was now wielding an unchallenged sceptre over a tranquil realm?

Mr. Bright next alluded to the great system of emigration going on from England and Ireland to the United States, and said he could tell the landowners an important fact they would do well to consider. In America there were 140,000,000 acres of land, surveyed, mapped out, set apart for those who were ready to settle upon them. Under the operation of the Homestead Act, any man of twenty-one years of age might come into these territories, might choose what was called a section, which was 160 acres of land, being one-fourth of a square mile, and on payment of a fee of ten dollars, equal to two pounds English, he might apply to have this land conveyed to him for no other

payment for a term of five years. At the end of five years, if he had done what the Government required, the law gave him a patent, but what we should call a Parliamentary title, and the land became his own absolute freehold for ever. If English labourers knew all the facts, the temptation to emigrate would be irresistible to hundreds of thousands who had now no thought of moving to another country. The United States offered social equality and political equality; and they also offered the very highest education to all, for the mere payment of the school-rate prevailing through the various States of the Union. Mr. Bright closed with this eloquent peroration, in which he referred to the nature of his own efforts for the amelioration of the people:—

'I ask you if I am wrong in saying to the rich and the great, that I believe, if they knew their own interests, that it would be worth their while to try to make this country a more desirable country for the labourer to live in. If they disregard this great question, we, who are of the middle, and not absolutely powerless class, shall have to decide between the claims of territorial magnates and the just rights of millions of our countrymen. Some men I meet with—and now and then I wonder where they were born, and why they came into the world—regard these territorial magnates as idols before whom we are all to bow down in humble submission. Travellers tell us there is a tribe in Africa so entirely given up to superstition that they fill their huts and hovels with so many idols that they do not even leave room for their families. It may be so in this country. We build up a system which is injurious to our political freedom, and is destructive of the intelligence, and the comfort, and the morality, and the best interests of our producing and working classes. (*Cheers.*) Now, am I the enemy of any class, when I come forward to state facts like these, and to explain principles such as these? Shall we go on groping continually in the dark, and make no effort to strengthen our position?

'Do not suppose because I stand here oftener to find fault with the laws of my country than to praise them, that I am less English or less patriotic, or that I have less sympathy for my countrymen than other men have. (*Cheers.*) I want our country to be populous, to be powerful, and to be happy. But this can only be done—it never has been done in any country—but by just laws justly administered. I plead only for what I believe to be just. I wish to do wrong to no man. For twenty-five years I have stood before audiences—great meetings of my countrymen—pleading only for justice. (*Applause.*) During that time, as you know, I have endured measureless insult, and have passed through hurricanes of abuse. I need not tell you that my clients have not been generally the rich and the great, but rather the poor and the lowly. They cannot give me place and dignities and wealth; but honourable service in their cause yields me that which is of far higher and more lasting value—the consciousness that I have laboured to expound and uphold laws which, though they were not given amid the thunders of Sinai, are not less the commandments of God, and not less intended to promote and secure the happiness of men.' (*Great cheering.*)

Three days after the delivery of this speech, Mr. Bright was entertained at a *soirée* given by a number of his constituents in the Assembly Room of Nock's Hotel. On the motion of Mr. William Morgan, a resolution was carried recognizing 'the

patriotic labours of the members for the borough.' Mr. Scholefield, the senior member for Birmingham, was unable to be present, but in responding to the motion Mr. Bright gave a long and interesting address upon the history and action of the Reformed Parliament. Ladies were present at the gathering, and in commencing his speech the hon. gentleman said it had not only been common, as Mr. R. W. Dale had said, to create the impression that what are called serious people should not meddle with politics, but that these public questions were entirely out of the field in which women should exercise themselves. He confidently differed from any such opinion, for what was done under the form of political action could by no means be indifferent to the mothers, and wives, and sisters, and daughters of England.

Mr. Bright then went on to say that he had no fondness for political meetings and platform work; and that it was the existence of grievances which for twenty years had called him from the quiet of his own home, and from the pursuit of business. Still, there was a bright side to the aspect of England, in the changes which had taken place of recent years. The first great measure which suggested itself to him was the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, which gave the right of Parliamentary representation to the whole nation of Ireland. The next great step in making this a perfectly free country was the Reform Act, in connection with which measure Birmingham took so distinguished a part. The speaker then alluded to a still more celebrated measure, that for the abolition of slavery, which affected not England alone, but the opinion of the world. It did more than emancipate 800,000 slaves in the colonies of England; it set an example which the world could not but follow. 'You may rely upon it that from this great act is to be dated to a large extent the creation of that conscientious feeling in England which has been growing from that day to this; while it is owing to the unteachable spirit of the slaveholders of another country that a great nation has been brought into the throes of a fearful revolution, out of which I trust not only will that nation itself be purified, but that four millions of slaves will be free.' Then came this tribute to a distinguished Birmingham citizen, Mr. Sturge: 'And whilst this passes through my mind, I cannot help for a moment touching upon the fact that one of your citizens, now no more, my personal and intimate friend, was one of the most eminent of those who endeavoured to stir the conscience of the English people to that great act of justice;

and I never pass, as I do often pass when I come here, that memorable figure of him which you have erected in one of the most conspicuous places in your town, without hoping that every citizen of Birmingham, when he comes to consider public questions, whether regarding this country or that other country to which reference has already been made, and where that great struggle is being carried on, will endeavour to be animated by the disinterested, the noble, and the Christian spirit by which your late eminent townsman was distinguished.'

Mr. Bright then referred to the Poor Law Amendment Act passed by the Whigs, which did credit to their administration. Then came a very quiet and unsatisfactory time. The Whigs had settled comfortably into their places. They had a motto, he believed, which they had not publicly announced. It was this, 'A place for every man, and every man in his place.' They were thrown out of office in 1841, and Parliament assembled after the general election with a majority of ninety pledged to oppose the abolition of the Corn Law. Sir Robert Peel and his great party looked down with contempt upon all who were moving in that question; but the result showed how much was to be done by continuous and disinterested labour on behalf of a great cause, and by appealing to the sympathies of the whole nation. The great work was not achieved by a number of benevolent ladies and gentlemen forming societies all over the country, and giving people alms, but it was by repealing the Corn Law—by a simple act of justice, an act that was so just that he had never, or scarcely ever heard a man deny its justice, except on something which they called political considerations, which meant that there were political reasons why that great act of justice should not be done. But the question of corn was not all—there was that of sugar. In 1840 the single article of sugar in this country cost—by reason of the monopoly—not less than six millions sterling more than it would have cost if it could have been bought freely in the market of the world. The fall of the corn monopoly, which was the keystone of the arch, let everything supported by it down. The sugar, timber, and other monopolies fell, amongst them being that important monopoly which our shipowners had, whose abolition had been so advantageous to the whole country. Once there was a tariff with 1,200 articles paying duty; now there were, perhaps, only twelve or fifteen articles upon which duties were levied.

The French Treaty was next referred to. Englishmen had

been taught to regard the French as their natural enemies, but the Emperor showed that he was willing to have more intimate relations with this country. The treaty was eventually effected—effected solely, on the part of England, by Mr. Cobden; and he (Mr. Bright) believed that it was the most important document of the kind that had ever been signed by the rulers of any two nations in Europe. The last of the reforms touched upon was that for securing the freedom of the press, in which no persons in Parliament were more actively concerned than Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Cobden, and the speaker. Referring to the *Birmingham Post* in order to illustrate the operation of the paper duty, Mr. Bright said, 'You pay a penny for your admirable newspaper in this town, and when doing so you are not conscious, perhaps, of what happened only a very short time ago. The paper on which it was printed, say ten years ago, had a stamp of a penny upon it: the paper itself did not cost probably more than a halfpenny, and therefore there was over a hundred or perhaps two hundred per cent. of taxation upon the paper before our friend Mr. Jaffray could touch it. Well, then —I am not speaking now of the stamp—there was also a tax of, at one time threepence, and at another time three-halfpence, per pound upon paper itself at the paper mill.' The impost was removed, the penny press would bear comparison with their dearer neighbours, and there was but one opinion as to the inestimable benefit which the freedom of the press had conferred upon the country. Every single thing he had mentioned was now by general consent admitted to have been a just and beneficial change. 'You can hardly find a Tory now. It is a blessed thing, but somehow or other either the Tories die off, or they change themselves, or they do certainly take a little different colour. You can hardly find any of them now but will admit that a great number of these changes—some will admit that all of them—have been wise changes, and beneficial to the country. And yet it is very odd that the very same men at this moment set up to be authorities in politics.' After being wrong in everything for twenty-five years back, they yet called upon the constituencies to believe that they were the men, and that wisdom would die with them.

Having touched upon the question of Reform, observing that the Act of 1832 was insufficient, and that there must be another substantial measure before long, Mr. Bright dealt with the question of emigration. The largest portion of the emigrants went from Ireland; and, as he had said before, it was a curious fact that whenever an Irishman planted his foot in any

foreign land, he became an irreconcilable enemy of England. 'But if the government of England in Ireland had been a just government—if it had been just even since the time of the Union, sixty years ago—all that hostile feeling might have been cleared away long since, and Irishmen would have been as loyal and contented as any class of Englishmen. And if they had found it necessary from any cause to transport themselves to the United States, you would have found in the United States the feeling that they had not been driven by injustice from their native land, but that, turning back to that land with the loving, longing gaze of patriots, they might have said,

> "Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
> Who never to himself hath said,
> This is my own, my native land?"

But now—now, under the feelings created by a long course of misgovernment, continued from father to son, directed against their social, their political, and their religious feeling, there is hardly an Irishman in the United States who is not the victim of any man who chooses to make political capital by exciting hostility against England. There can be no just government of Ireland until you abolish the Irish Protestant Church.'

The hon. gentleman next discussed the situation of foreign affairs, and the doctrine of non-intervention. The people of England must before long make up their minds whether they would accept the doctrine of non-intervention in its entirety and completeness, or whether they would allow it when it was convenient, and repudiate it when their passions had been a little stirred. Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell—the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary—had been saturated with the theories and doctrines upon the question of non-intervention and foreign affairs which prevailed near the beginning of the century, and it was in consequence of these feelings that they could not keep themselves out of the Crimean War. Yet notwithstanding our foreign policy, and the conflict which had occurred, the affairs of Europe were not settled on a permanent basis, and Europe had doubled the armed men and doubled the military expenditure which it had before the Crimean War. Then there was the question between Denmark and Germany. It was not yet settled, though perhaps it might be settled. Such questions could only be permanently settled by those who were deeply interested in them. 'We are not deeply interested in this question—I do not mean interested in the sense of the Prince of Wales marrying a daughter of the King of Denmark.

I think nothing would be more unfortunate than that, whilst the members of the royal family are not allowed to marry from English citizens, they should, in marrying abroad, therefore embroil Englishmen in the quarrels of foreign countries. I can imagine nothing more likely to make Englishmen doubt whether royal alliances can have any pleasant interest to them if such a course is taken.'

Alluding to the popular ignorance on the question of the deliberations of the Cabinet, Mr. Bright observed that there was an inner Cabinet, and it was generally compounded of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, and occasionally one other Minister. He furnished some illustrations from recent political history on this matter, and added that a great deal of the most delicate business of foreign affairs was at that time conducted almost entirely by Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell. Steps might be taken, of which other members of the Cabinet might be ignorant, that would plunge the country in war. If there were such members, he begged them to insist upon knowing everything that was done; and he exhorted people everywhere to see that the power of England should not be exerted, the blood of England should not be split, the wealth created by the toils of Englishmen should not be squandered, except in some great cause in which the solid and permanent interests of the country were engaged.

In concluding his address, amid enthusiastic applause, Mr. Bright said: 'We have within us the elements of a nation far greater in the future than anything that has been in the past, even in the most renowned and glorious days. We can set ourselves free from the prejudices and from the darkness of the past. We can give to our people education, we can open up to them new sources of industry, can reduce the expenditure of our government, we can invite another million or two of our people within the pale of the constitution, and taking them, we can ask counsel of them that we may assist each other in the wise government of this great nation. All this we can do, and all that is wanted is that in working out our political problems we should take for our foundation that which recommends itself to our conscience as just and moral. I have not the slightest regard for that statesmanship which is divorced from the morality that we say ought to guide us in our private life, which we gather for a nation as for individuals from the religion which we profess. Time, persistent labour, fidelity to the great principle which we hold and believe in, will certainly give us the victory over existing evils, as similar qualities and similar

conduct have given the victories which I have described to you.'

In the House of Commons, in the session of 1864, Mr. Bright spoke upon several interesting topics, in addition to the foreign questions already named. He put in a strong plea for Mr. Herbert, the distinguished Royal Academician, when the subject of his fresco and the remuneration he was to receive for it was discussed in Supply. Mr. Bright described the painting as one that would reflect lustre upon any artist in any country, and in this view he was supported by Mr. Gregory and other members.

When the case of the young convict Townley was discussed, Mr. Bright showed the terrible uncertainty which prevailed with regard to the death punishment. Townley had been sentenced to death for the murder of a young lady named Goodwin, who had been engaged to him, but had broken off the match. The Home Sectetary reprieved Townley, in consequence of a report made under the Lunacy Act, though, as the result of another examination made, he was declared perfectly sane. Townley was afterwards removed to Bethlehem Hospital, and from thence to Pentonville Prison, his sentence having been commuted into one of penal servitude for life. In consequence of the facts attending this case, and the contradictory reports which had been made, Sir George Grey brought in a bill for amending the Insane Prisoners Act, which would obviate all such difficulties as had arisen in Townley's case. In the discussion on this bill, Mr. Bright said that whether they hanged Townley, or Wright, or any one else, the punishment of death was at war with the best and noblest sentiments of the noblest portion of the people. That warfare which they allowed to remain year after year would continue to be a warfare with the best sense of the Home Department and the best sense of the population.

At a later date, namely, on the 3rd of May, Mr. Bright entered more fully into this question of capital punishment, which, as we have seen, attracted his attention at the very commencement of his career. Mr. Ewart, on the day specified, brought forward a motion for the abolition of the punishment of death. He spoke eloquently in its favour, and was as ably supported by his seconder, Mr. Denman. Lord Henry Lennox moved as an amendment 'that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the operation of the laws relating to capital punishment.' Sir George Grey said he believed it would neither be safe nor expedient to abolish capital punishment in all cases. Speaking

on behalf of the Government, he was unwilling to let this important question be decided by an accidental majority in a committee. He suggested that both motion and amendment should be withdrawn, and then the Government would recommend Her Majesty to issue a commission of inquiry into the subject.

Mr. Bright followed, and in reference to the opinions of the Judges, quoted by Sir G. Grey, he cited the observations of an eminent Irish Judge, made in a conversation with himself. He said, 'Beware of the Judges. If Parliament had acted on the opinion of the Judges, we should have been hanging now for forgery, for horse-stealing, and for I know not how many other offences for which capital punishment has long been abolished.' As to the question whether the best form of investigating this subject was not by a committee of the House, he (Mr. Bright) would undertake to say that if he were to inquire in every civilized country in the world where there was a representative legislative assembly, he would find that the changes which had been made in their laws had been made invariably in consequence of inquiries instituted by those chambers, and carried on by means of committees formed amongst their members. He admitted that the bulk of the committees of the House were not fairly constituted, but as regarded obtaining evidence, a committee would be equal to any tribunal that could be established.

With respect to the main question, the House had been rather led away from it. This crime of murder was a net which included cases as different in their quality as in their guilt, and in their consequences to society, as the difference between the lowest class of murder which the law now included and the pettiest larceny which was punishable before a single magistrate. Yet all these were part of the same list of crimes, and men condemned for them would be executed, unless the Home Secretary was strongly importuned to interfere. Mr. Bright then said:

'There can be no doubt whatever that if capital punishment be retained, and if it be absolutely necessary that there should be a crime called murder to which capital punishment attaches, it is no less necessary that there should be, as there are in some other countries, three or four degrees of manslaughter, and that for the highest degree of manslaughter there should be the highest kind of secondary punishment, and that the power should be placed in the hands of the jury of determining what should be the particular class in which the criminal should be placed. There is no doubt that this is necessary to be done. I think Voltaire—who said a good many things that were worth remembering—remarked that the English were the only people who murdered by law. And Mirabeau, when in this country, hearing of a number of persons who had been hanged on a certain morning, said, "The English nation is the

most merciless of any that I have heard or read of." And at this very moment, when we have struck off within the last fifty years at least a hundred offences which were then capital, we remain still in this matter the most merciless of Christian countries.'

The hon. member referred to the cases of Townley, Wright, and Hall, and affirmed that there was not a country in Europe, nor a free State in America, in which either of those criminals would have been punished with death. Yet Sir George Gray continued to repeat the same arguments for continuing a law which drove him to distraction almost every time he had to administer it. 'I am surprised that the right hon. gentleman, who has had to face the suffering which has been brought on him by this law, has never had the courage to come to this House and ask it fairly to consider, in the light of the evidence which all other Governments and the laws of all other countries afford, whether the time has not come when this fearful punishment may be abolished. The right hon gentleman says the punishment is so terrible that it will deter offenders from the commission of crime. Of course it is terrible to one just standing upon the verge of the grave; but months before, when the crime is committed, when the passion is upon the criminal, the punishment is of no avail whatsoever. I do not think it is possible to say too much against the argument that because this is a dreadful punishment, it is very efficient to deter a criminal from the commission of crime.'

Having cited the humane position on this question occupied by Russia, Tuscany, Belgium, etc., Mr. Bright asked whether there was any man with a particle of sense or the power of reason who believed that human life in this country was made more secure because ten or twelve men were publicly put to death every year. The security for human life depended upon the reverence for human life; and unless we could inculcate in the minds of the people a veneration for that which God only had given, we did little by the most severe and barbarous penalties to preserve the safety of our citizens. Mr. Bright then read some interesting extracts from letters written by the Governors of the three states of Rhode Island, Michigan, and Wisconsin, where the death penalty had been abolished, showing the salutary results of the abolition.

The special cases which had been cited that night with regard to executions were not, he continued, by any means the most fearful that had occurred. There was a case at Chester which must rejoice the fiends below, if fiends there be, to discover that, after the law of gentleness and love had been

preached on earth for eighteen hundred years, such a scene as that could be enacted in our day in one of the most civilized and renowned cities of the country. And these were cases which would happen again if this law remained; and all the difficulties which the right hon. gentleman had alluded to that night and on previous occasions were difficulties inseparable from the continuance of the punishment. Parliament had unfortunately been very heedless upon this question; and Secretaries of State had gone on with their painful duties, never having the courage to ask Parliament to consider whether the system might not be entirely abolished. It was in opposition to the sentiment of the most moral and religious population of the country. Whenever the announcement of an impending execution was made, there was a feeling of doubt in almost every house in England as to whether the law was right, and a feeling of disgust and horror amongst hundreds of thousands of the best portion of the people.

None of us wished to go back to the state of barbarism of a century ago when so many men were hanged, not one of whom had been convicted of the crime of murder; but just the same class of arguments were used then in support of such barbarism as were used at the present time. He wondered that the Home Secretary had not been driven to propose to the House that this evil should be put an end to. Was the Englishman worse than any other man? Was the nation worse than other nations, that the same lenient laws could not be practised? For himself, he said we could wash vengeance and blood from our code without difficulty and without danger.

As to the composition of the proposed Commission, Mr. Bright said he hoped it would not be formed of Judges, for in all past times a majority of them had been opposed to the amelioration of the Criminal Code. With a Commission so constituted as to command the confidence of all, he believed that a great improvement of the law would be effected, though all might not be achieved that Mr. Ewart desired. But in time they might arrive unanimously at the opinion, that the security of public or private life in England did not depend upon the public strangling of three or four poor wretches every year. 'This Parliament is about to expire, I suppose, before very long —though some say it is to endure during another session; I should be glad indeed if it might be said of this Parliament at some future time, that it had dared to act upon the true lessons, and not upon the superstitions of the past; and that it might be declared to be the Parliament which destroyed the scaffold

and the gallows, in order that it might teach the people that human life is sacred, and that on that principle alone can human life be secured.'

At the close of the debate, the amendment and motion were withdrawn, and this substantive resolution, moved by Mr. Neate, was agreed to: 'That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that she will be graciously pleased to inquire into the provisions and operation of the laws under which the punishment of death is now inflicted in the United Kingdom, and the manner in which it is inflicted; and to report whether it is desirable to make any alteration therein.'

One other question, that relating to temperance and the Permissive Bill, remains to be dealt with here. Mr. Bright is well known to be an abstemious man, and in a speech made at the annual meeting of the Society of Friends a few years ago, he stated that he would not say he had abstained for so long a period as thirty-five years, but for thirty-four years—from the time he became a householder—he had not introduced into his house any wine or spirituous liquors whatsoever. He had in his house no decanters, and he thought he had no wine-glasses, and had not had them since 1839, when he took to housekeeping. It had, perhaps, cost him some slight inconvenience, but altogether he had had no occasion to regret the step he then took.

Holding such views, and after so long a practice of personal abstinence, interest naturally attaches to the arguments which led Mr. Bright to oppose the Permissive Bill as he did in 1864. Mr. (now Sir Wilfrid) Lawson brought forward the bill in question, whereby it was proposed to make the issue of licences for the sale of intoxicating liquors subject to the veto of a given proportion of the ratepayers in a district. A good deal of interest was excited in the country over this proposition, and when the second reading came on in the House of Commons, on the 8th of June, a lengthy debate ensued. Captain Jervis moved the rejection of the bill.

Mr. Bright said that the question had now taken great hold upon the public mind, and it could not be spoken of as a scheme of wild enthusiasts. In dealing with the subject, we should look to the improved condition of the people or to special legislation: he preferred trusting to the former influence. He was old enough to remember when drunkenness amongst the upper classes was ten or twenty times more common than it was at present. Temperance had made great way amongst those classes who could obtain liquor at their will; and if it were possible to

make all classes in the country as temperate as those of whom he had spoken, we should be amongst the very soberest nations of the earth. But something might still be done by special legislation, for the condition of things was not satisfactory; and as regarded licences, in some cases the number of public-houses and beer-houses has been unnecessarily and mischievously increased. But the present proposal, that a majority of ratepayers should decide whether licences should be granted or renewed in their districts, was a novel experiment, and one which had never been proposed or sanctioned by the House, with regard to any other description of property, or any other interest. However desirous the mover might be to carry out his object, he (Mr. Bright) did not think it likely that the House of Commons would consent to such a proposition as that.

He would object altogether to allow such a matter as this to be decided by the vote of two-thirds of the ratepayers of any parish or town. 'I think there would be, in all probability, sudden, capricious, and unjust action under this bill, which would have a very unfortunate effect upon the interests of those immediately concerned; and I think it might also create throughout the country violent discussions on the question, and I am afraid might even produce a great and pernicious reaction against the very honest and good objects which my hon. friend desires to carry out. For that reason, as a member of this House representing a very large constituency, and having my sympathies entirely with those who are endeavouring to promote temperance amongst the people, and after much consideration on this subject, I have never yet seen my way at all to give a vote which would tend to pass a measure such as that now proposed to the House.' Those friends of temperance made a great mistake who argued that the sale of these articles was in itself absolutely evil and immoral. 'There is abundant ground on which to argue this question on which no man can assail or controvert them, and it is unfortunate for a great and good cause that any of its enthusiastic but illogical advocates should select arguments which cannot fairly be sustained.'

But if this Bill were disposed of, was there nothing else which the House could do to meet the growing opinion of the country on the question? He thought that the municipal councils of boroughs might be entrusted with the decision of how many licences should be granted in their districts, thus avoiding that capriciousness of action which would exist if the matter were left to the decision of a majority of ratepayers. In conclusion, Mr. Bright remarked: 'I have not that faith in any act of the

Legislature on this subject which my hon. friend has. I believe in the effects of the instruction of the people, and of the improvement which is gradually taking place amongst them. I think that drunkenness is not on the increase, but rather is declining; and I hope, whether the law be altered or not, we shall find our working classes becoming more and more sober than in past times. But as I have on many occasions been before the public favouring the efforts of the advocates of temperance, I have felt bound to state the reasons why I cannot give my vote in favour of this bill, and to suggest what the House might do by way of giving to the people through their municipal councils control over this question. By doing this you might promote temperance among the people, and at the same time avoid a great and manifest injustice to thousands of persons now engaged in this trade, whose property would be rendered uncertain, if not altogether destroyed, if the bill of the hon. gentleman should receive the sanction of the House.'

The bill was also strongly opposed by Mr. Roebuck, who described it as the most mischievous measure he had ever heard proposed. Sir George Grey objected to the proposal on grounds somewhat similar to those advanced by Mr. Bright; and after further discussion the second reading of the bill was negatived by a large majority, the dissentients being 292, and the supporters only 35.

The measure was reintroduced by its author in many subsequent sessions, but it was invariably rejected, in many instances by very decisive majorities.

CHAPTER V.

MR. BRIGHT ON CANADA.—GOVERNOR EYRE.—THE DEATH OF COBDEN.

Relations between England and the United States in 1865.—Excitement in England.—The Defences of Canada.—Debates in the House of Commons.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—Causes of the Panic.—Mr. Laird and the *Alabama*.—Our attitude towards the American Republic.—Mr. Bright on the Defence of the Canadian Frontier.—The Storm blows over.—Canadian Affairs in 1867.—Nova Scotia and the Confederation Scheme.—The Jamaica Massacre.—Governor Eyre condemned.—Mr. Bright on the Murder of Mr. Gordon.—Report of the Commission on the Massacre.—Prosecution of Governor Eyre.—Charge of the Lord Chief Justice.—Mr. Carlyle's Vindication of Mr. Eyre.—Death of Mr. Cobden.—Sketch of his Career.—His Character.—Tributes to the Deceased in the House of Commons.—Mr. Bright's Speech on unveiling the Statue at Bradford.—Funeral of Mr. Cobden at West Lavington.—Scene at the Grave.

THE relations between England and the United States were somewhat strained at the opening of the year 1865. There was a suspicion in this country that our hostility during the war might cause retaliation on the part of the States, and the attention of English statesmen was directed to our Canadian possessions. A portion of the American press, moreover, was very active in endeavouring to foment discord. Previous to the meeting of Parliament, the American Government gave formal notice of their intention to terminate the Convention under which England and the United States had mutually agreed not to fit out naval armaments upon the Canadian lakes. There were also some indications that America desired to terminate the Treaty of Commerce between the States and the provinces of British North America. The Fenian rising at this time added another disquieting element in the situation, and one which it was believed would result in great embarrassment in case of a rupture between England and the United States. Something of a panic ensued in the public mind in England, and the defences of Canada became one of the leading topics of the session. Mr. Bright endeavoured to calm the feelings of the people on this question, and when the danger blew over it was seen that his advice from the first had been right and wise.

The English Government, while themselves defenceless, alarm, nevertheless directed a report to be prepared engineer officer, Colonel Jervois, upon the existing state province as to the means of defence against invasion, and as the measures and expenditure required to place the frontier in a complete state of security. On the assembling of Parliament, attention was called to the matter; but Lord Palmerston entreated the House of Commons to abstain from discussion of these topics at the present moment, and not gratuitously to assume that the people of the United States were hostilely disposed towards this country.

Further debates, however, took place in both Houses; and on the 13th of March Mr. Seymour Fitzgerald formally introduced the whole subject in the Commons. In the course of the debate Mr. Cardwell said our relations with the United States were perfectly friendly; but if the time ever came that Canada was at war, war with Canada would be war with England. Mr. Disraeli did not see that there was any immediate danger of our being placed in collision with the Americans owing to our connexion with Canada. Lord Palmerston said he trusted that the two countries and Governments would both feel it to be their interest by every honourable means to preserve peace, and that the subjects indicated were not such as to be incapable of amicable adjustment.

Mr. Bright, in a very elaborate speech, unfolded his views generally upon our relations with Canada. The question was one of delicacy, he said, for it referred to the possibility of war between this country and the United States. The difficulty was that if there were a war party in the United States, it had a strong temptation to enter without hesitation on a war with England, because it might feel that through Canada it could inflict a great humiliation upon this country. It was perfectly well known, moreover, that there was no power whatever in this United Kingdom to defend successfully the territory of Canada against the power of the United States. Now, would Canada attack the States? Clearly not. Would the States attack Canada? Clearly not. There was not a man of any influence in the United States in favour of this, with a view to the forcible annexation of Canada to the Union. The ruffians from the South, who had made a raid in Northern territory, had been far too leniently treated. There had been nothing done previous to this raid, but the moment these troubles arose, then there was a call for further defence, and everything was done.

is the state of things now?' asked Mr. Bright. is the greatest possible calm on the frontier. The d States have not a word to say against Canada. The adian people have found that they were in the wrong, and have now returned to their right mind. There is not a man in Canada at this moment, I believe, who has any idea that the United States Government has the smallest notion of attacking them, now or at any future time, on account of anything that has transpired between the United States and Canada during these trials. But if there comes a war in which Canada shall suffer and be made a victim, it will be a war between the Government of Washington and the Government of London.' This he considered was a most improbable event. Our history for two hundred years back had been a record of calamitous wars, but England had now become wiser. She was not at this moment in favour of war, and if war arose out of which Canada should suffer, he believed honestly that it would not come from this country. But was the United States for war? On the contrary, no Government that had ever existed in America had been so favourable to peace with all foreign countries, and especially England, as the Government of which Mr. Lincoln was the head. Whence, then, came the anxiety which undoubtedly to some extent prevailed?

'It may be assumed even that the Government is not wholly free from it, for they have shown it in an almost ludicrous manner by proposing a vote of £50,000. It is said the newspapers have got into a sort of panic. They can do that any night between the hours of six and twelve o'clock, when they write their articles. They are either very courageous or very panic-stricken.

'It is said that "the City" joins in this feeling. We know what "the City" means—the right hon. gentleman alluded to it to-night. It means that the people who deal in shares—though that does not describe the whole of them—"the moneyed interest" of the City, are alarmed. Well, I never knew the City to be right. Men who are deep in great monetary transactions, and who are steeped to the lips sometimes in perilous speculations, are not able to take broad and dispassionate views of political questions of this nature.

'As to the newspapers, I agree with my hon. friend the member for Bradford (Mr. W. E. Forster) when, referring to one of them in particular, he intimated that he thought its course was indicated by a wish to cover its own confusion. Surely, after four years' uninterrupted publication of lies with regard to America, I should think it has done pretty much to destroy its influence on foreign questions for ever.'

As to the meddlesomeness of the House of Lords on foreign questions, and their general neglect of legislation, Mr. Bright went on to say: The Commons did little in the way of work, and the Lords absolutely nothing. Members would remember

a couplet, taught them in their younger days, and intended to inculcate the virtue of industry:

> 'Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do;'

and he did not believe that men, however high in station, were exempt from that unfortunate effect which arose to every one from a course of continued idleness. With regard to the origin of the public anxiety on this question, was there not a consciousness in our heart of hearts that we had not behaved generously to our neighbour—a pricking of conscience that tended to make us cowards at this particular juncture? Mr. Bright then reviewed the course of events of the past four years, observing that the Government had accorded belligerent rights to the Southern Confederacy with unfriendly haste; they had acted in the case of the *Trent* in a manner that was not likely to remove difficulties and improve the feeling between the two nations; and had permitted the *Alabama* to be built, supplied with munitions of war and manned in this country.

In connection with the affair of the *Alabama* came this spirited attack on Mr. Laird:—

'I do not complain that the member for Birkenhead has struck up a friendship with Captain Semmes, who may probably be described, as another sailor once was of similar pursuits, as being "the mildest mannered man that ever scuttled ship." (*Laughter.*) Therefore I do not complain of a man who has an acquaintance with that notorious person; and I do not complain, and did not then, that the member for Birkenhead looks admiringly upon the greatest example which men have ever seen of the greatest crime which men have ever committed. I do not complain even that he should applaud that which is founded upon a gigantic traffic in living flesh and blood—a traffic into which no subject of this realm can enter without being deemed a felon in the eyes of our law, and punished as such. But what I do complain of is this, that the hon. gentleman the member for Birkenhead, a magistrate of a county, a deputy-lieutenant—whatever that may be,—a representative of a constituency, and having a seat in this ancient and honourable assembly,—that he should, as I believe he did, if concerned in the building of this ship, break the law of his country, by driving us into an infraction of international law, and treating with undeserved disrespect the proclamation of neutrality by the Queen. (*Hear, hear.*)

'I have another complaint to make, and in allusion to that hon. member. It is within your recollection that when on a former occasion he made that speech and defended his course, he declared that he would rather be the builder of a dozen *Alabamas* than do something which nobody has done. That language was received with repeated cheering from the Opposition side of the House. Well, Sir, I undertake to say that that was at least a most unfortunate circumstance, and I beg to tell the hon. gentleman that at the end of last session, when the great debate took place on the question of Denmark, there were many men on this side of the House who had no objection whatever to see the present Government turned out of office, for they had many grounds

complaint against them; but they felt it impossible that they should take the responsibility of bringing into office the right hon. member for Buckinghamshire or the party who could utter such cheers on such a subject as that.' (*Cheers.*)

Mr. Bright next showed that there had been a gradual change of feeling amongst Ministers and in the House on the American question since the time of Mr. Gladstone's declaration at Newcastle, to the effect that the South had established itself as a nation. He also referred to the indiscriminating abuse heaped upon the United States by Mr. Roebuck, and the unsleeping ill-will of Lord Cranborne (the Marquis of Salisbury). Being interrupted by Mr. Roebuck with an expression that he adhered to his old sentiments, Mr. Bright said he was sorry to hear it. He had hoped that these things would be regretted and repented of, and trusted that if any in this country who had been thus ungenerous should fall into trouble, they would find friends more kind and more just across the Atlantic. The millions of Lancashire and Yorkshire—whose industry had not only created but sustained the fabric of the national power—had no kind of sympathy with the views which he had been condemning. 'They have been more generous and more wise; they have shown that magnanimity and love of freedom are not extinct. And, speaking of the county from which I come—the county of many sorrows, whose griefs have hung like a dark cloud over almost every heart during the last three years—all the attempts which the agents of the Confederacy have made there by money, by printing, by platform speeches, by agitation, have utterly failed to get from that population one expression of sympathy with the American insurrection.' If the bond of union and friendship between England and America should remain unbroken, they would not have to thank the wealthy and the cultivated, but those laborious millions whom statesmen and histories too frequently took little account of.

There was, no doubt, said Mr. Bright, a war party in the United States, and that was the Irish party; but it was merely a small percentage, which had no sensible effect upon the constitution of Congress, or upon legislation or government. With regard to the claims made by the respective countries, it was quite absurd to suppose that the English Government and the Government at Washington could have a question about half a million of money which they could not amicably settle. When the passions had cooled down, he was quite sure that Mr. Seward, Earl Russell, Mr. Adams, and Sir Frederick Bruce would be able without much difficulty to settle this matter. Having

observed that a great many bubbles would burst before that which had been described as the 'bubble republic' of America, the speaker went on to say: 'Some people fear that, should America become a great nation, she will be arrogant and aggressive. It does not follow that it should be so. The character of a nation does not depend altogether upon its size, but upon the instruction, the civilization, and the morals of its people. You fancy the supremacy of the sea will pass away from you; and the noble lord, who has had much experience, and is supposed to be wiser on the subject than any other man in the House, will say that "Rule Britannia" may become obsolete. Well, inasmuch as the supremacy of the seas means arrogance and the assumption of a dictatorial power on the part of this country, the sooner that becomes obsolete the better.' Nature would not be baffled because we were jealous of the United States. The States were rapidly growing in population: and would constant snarling at a great republic alter this state of things, or swell us up in these islands to 40,000,000 or 50,000,000, or bring them down to our 30,000,000?' Finally, Mr. Bright observed—

'It is on record that when the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was about to begin his great work, David Hume wrote a letter to him urging him not to employ the French but the English tongue; "because," he said, "our establishments in America promise superior stability and duration to the English language." How far that promise has been in part fulfilled, we who are living now can see; but how far it will be more largely and more completely fulfilled in after-times we must leave after-times to tell. I believe that in the centuries which are to come it will be the greatest pride and the highest renown of England, that from her loins have sprung a hundred millions—it may be two hundred millions—of men who dwell and prosper on that continent which the grand old Genoese gave to Europe. Sir, if the sentiments which I have uttered shall become the sentiments of the Parliament and people of the United Kingdom—if the moderation which I have described shall mark the course of the Government and of the people of the United States—then, notwithstanding some present irritation and some present distrust—and I have faith both in us and in them—I believe that these two great commonwealths will march abreast, the parents and the guardians of freedom and justice, wheresoever their language shall be spoken and their power shall extend.' (*Loud cheers.*)

Some days after this discussion, Lord Hartington proposed a vote of £50,000 for the fortification of Quebec, being part of a sum of £200,000 which would be asked for the defence of Canada. A lengthy debate ensued upon the policy of defending Canada by fortifications, and also upon the best mode of resistance in the event of invasion from the United States. In the end the sum was voted by a large majority.

Mr. Bright opposed the vote, reiterating his conviction that

no one believed this country could attempt a successful defence of the frontier of Canada against the whole power of the United States. He objected to the vote, not on the ground that he did not believe in the probability of war, or that the amount was too large, but that its expenditure would be taken as a menace; the most that it could do was to show that some people here, and the Government itself, had some little distrust of the United States. So far, it might be productive of injury. He maintained that the vote was the commencement of a policy which we should have to abandon, because it would entail on the Canadians a burden in respect to fortifications that would make them dissatisfied with this country, and ultimately lead to their separation from us. To that separation he did not object. It would be better for both. But of all the misfortunes that could happen to Canada, this would be the greatest, that their separation should take place after a period of irritation and estrangement; and that we should have on the American continent another element hostile to England. He regretted the proposition, but after all it was like everything else that was done by the Government, who appeared to be divided into two parties, one pulling one way and one the other. The result was that they pleased nobody, and failed to produce a good effect in any direction. He did not place much reliance on the speech of Mr. Disraeli, because on matters of this kind, whatever might be their animosities in other directions, the Opposition and the Ministerialists always shook hands. No doubt if Mr. Disraeli were on the Treasury Bench, and Lord Palmerston were sitting opposite to him, the latter would extend to Mr. Disraeli the very same support that he now received from him. 'This question seems to me so plain,' urged Mr. Bright, 'so much on the surface, appealing so much to our common sense, having in it such great issues for the future, that I am persuaded it is the duty of the House of Commons on this occasion to take the matter out of the hands of the Executive Government, and to determine that, with regard to the future policy of Canada, we will not ourselves expend the money of the English tax-payers, and not force upon the tax-payers of Canada a burden which, I am satisfied, they will not long continue to bear.'

As Mr. Bright predicted, the storm blew over, and early in April the Government received an intimation from Mr. Seward that the Government of the United States intended to withdraw its notice for the abrogation of the treaty of 1817, and that the passport system would cease immediately.

Two years later, nevertheless, the affairs of Canada again occupied the attention of the British Legislature. In February, 1867, the Conservative Government introduced the North American Provinces Confederation Bill, which provided for the union of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, under the name of the Dominion of Canada, with a Parliament, to consist of the Queen, a Senate of 72 members, and a House of Commons of 181 members.

When the second reading was moved in the Lower House, Mr. Bright, amongst others, complained of the manner in which the bill had been hurried on. There was a petition signed by 31,000 adult males of Nova Scotia—more than half the adult population—against Nova Scotia being included. Whether the scheme were a good one or a bad one, scarcely anything could be more foolish than that any of the provinces should be dragged into it. He could not discover any urgency in the matter at all. Mr. Gladstone had referred to the desire of the Canadians to copy as closely as possible the institutions of the mother-country; but he (Mr. Bright) ventured to say that the clause enabling the Governor-General and his Cabinet to put seventy men in the council for life, inserted into the whole scheme the germ of a malady which would spread, and which before very long would require an alteration of this Act and of the constitution of this new Confederation. There were some other points he desired to mention—one of great importance. 'What was to be done with the question of defence? Was this country to continue to maintain 12,000 or 14,000 men to garrison the fortresses of Canada, which, after all, would be of no service if the country were invaded by the Americans.' But there was no desire on the part of America to annex Canada forcibly. There were persons who ill-naturedly said the loyalty of the Canadians had its price; but certainly if they applied to us for railway grants, works of defence, etc., it would be better for us, and less demoralising to them, that they should become an independent State. The time had come when it should be clearly understood that the taxes of this country were no longer to go across the Atlantic to pay the expenses of the government of the colonies. Canada ran no risk of aggression whatever, and every farthing spent with the idea of shutting out American aggression was money squandered through a hallucination which we ought to get rid of. 'For my share,' added the speaker, 'I want the population of these provinces to do that which they believe best for their own interests—to remain with this country if they like it, in the most friendly manner, or to

become independent States if they wish it. If they should prefer to unite themselves with the United States, I should not complain even of that. But whatever be their course, there is no man in this House or in those provinces who has a more sincere wish for their greatness and their welfare than I have who have taken the liberty thus to criticise this bill.'

The bill passed through both Houses, and became law on the 29th of March. In the following year there was a Fenian raid into Canada, which was vigorously repelled by the militia; but we need not go through the subsequent history of Canada. Suffice it to state that whatever differences afterwards arose were amicably settled, and that she now presents to the world an enterprising and intelligent population of four million persons, enjoying the fullest measure of civil and religious liberty, and using their best efforts for the colonization of British North America.

In the year 1865 occurred the Jamaica massacre, an event which greatly excited the people of this country, and divided the most eminent of our literary men and statesmen into hostile camps. A negro insurrection having begun at Morant Bay, by resistance offered to the capture of a negro criminal, on the 9th of October, Governor Eyre suppressed the rebellion by a high-handed exercise of his powers. Martial law was proclaimed in the island. Not content, however, with suppressing the insurrection, Governor Eyre continued the executions, and amongst those condemned to death, even on ludicrously insufficient *primâ facie* evidence, was George William Gordon, a coloured member of the Legislature, and also a member of one of the Christian churches in Jamaica. Gordon, indeed, was seized in a part of the island which was not under martial law, and yet he was tried by martial law, and murdered. When the report of Governor Eyre's unwarrantable and sanguinary proceedings reached this country, together with his own despatches, a feeling of indignation was aroused amongst a great body of the people. Others, again, acting under the impression that the Governor had saved the colony, defended deeds which history must mark with the stamp of infamy.

Meetings condemnatory of Governor Eyre took place in various parts of the country. At one held in Manchester, his antecedents were fully laid before the audience and every credit given him for his conduct while in Australia. All that the meeting demanded was an investigation, and a deputation was appointed to wait on Earl Russell to prefer that request. As Mr. T. B. Potter observed the meeting wished to do nothing

unjust towards him; they merely wished that the name of England might be vindicated from what they considered a blot on the national escutcheon. Mr. Bright, speaking at Rochdale on the trial and execution of Mr. Gordon, said that from beginning to end it was a mass of illegality, and he believed there was not a judge sitting upon the bench in the United Kingdom who, speaking in his private capacity, would doubt for one single moment that Mr. Gordon was murdered. At a meeting held at Bradford he said: 'I take my opinion only from documents furnished here, by those whose interest it is to put the most favourable interpretation on their conduct, and I say that murder is foul, and that there is no murder more foul than that done by men in authority under the pretence of law; I say if murder has not yet changed its name, and be yet a crime visited with punishment in this country, then I hope that the Governor of Jamaica and his accomplices will have to stand at the bar of justice for the murder of Mr. Gordon.'

For these utterances the member for Birmingham fell under the ban of the not very withering eloquence of Sir. John Pakington, in the House of Commons. The question arose on the Report of the Address being brought up on the 9th of February, 1866. Mr. Bright replied very forcibly to his critic, and having dismissed all idea of party feeling, said he had not prejudged Governor Eyre. He reiterated his belief that Mr. Gordon had been cruelly murdered. In condemning the Governor he had taken the latter's own statement. He grieved to say that there were many persons in this country who did not feel the same sense of wrong and injustice when anything like this happened, if it were inflicted only upon those unfortunate 'niggers,' as they would if white men had suffered in a similar manner. He regarded every life among those men—before the law and before the sovereign authority of the Queen—as important as any life in this country or in the House, and it was idle to tell him that when he stood on a platform before thousands of his countrymen, he was to consider, beeause they were black, the lives of 2,000 subjects of the Queen as nothing in comparison with the feelings of Governor Eyre and his accomplices. But the Government had appointed a Commission, and he would leave the matter to the thorough investigation of such Commission. 'I say, Sir,' Mr. Bright continued, 'that the right hon. gentleman has allowed, it may be, an official sympathy for Governor Eyre to weigh with him in this matter, and he has thought it necessary to give me notice that he would come down to the House and pronounce a solemn censure upon

my conduct. I tell him that in all the public speeches I have ever made—and they are not a few, as the House knows—there are no passages in those speeches to which I will to my last hour more firmly adhere than to those which the right hon. gentleman has commented upon. There is nothing in them that I have to condemn myself for—there is nothing in them that I retract; and if the same circumstances happened again, I would repeat those passages, and, if it were possible, with a more burning indignation would I condemn atrocities which have cast a foul blot upon the character of English governors.'

When the report of the Commissioners was published, it was found that the view taken by the opponents of Governor Eyre had been perfectly substantiated and justified. The Commissioners reported that 439 persons had suffered by martial law; that about 1,000 dwellings had been burnt; that about 600 persons (including aged matrons, young boys, and women in expectation of confinement) had been flogged, in many cases with a new instrument of torture made of piano-wire; that the punishments inflicted were excessive, the executions unnecessarily frequent, the burning of houses wanton; and that they saw no proof of Gordon's complicity in the outbreak, or in an organized conspiracy against Government.

The home Government having declined to prosecute Governor Eyre, the 'Jamaica Committee' was formed for this purpose, with Mr. John Stuart Mill for chairman. This was followed by the formation of the 'Eyre Defence and Aid Fund,' which had for its president the Earl of Shrewsbury, and for its vice-presidents Thomas Carlyle and Sir Roderick Murchison. Amongst other defenders of Mr. Eyre, either actively or by subscription, were Mr. Ruskin, Mr. Tennyson, Prof. Tyndall, the Rev. Charles Kingsley, and Sir Thomas Gladstone, besides several noblemen whose names were not of much weight or moment. But against these, and for the vindication of law and justice, are to be set the names of Mr. J. Stuart Mill, Mr. Bright, Prof. Fawcett, Mr. Joseph Cowen, M.P., Mr. Herbert Spencer, Professors Thorold Rogers, Cairnes, F. W. Newman, Beesly, and Goldwin Smith, and many members of Parliament and others. The proceedings against Governor Eyre and his associates proved abortive, the bills against them being thrown out; but there fortunately remains in the annals of our jurisprudence the irrefragable charge of Lord Chief Justice Cockburn—one of the finest charges ever delivered by an English judge, and one which at the same time leaves not a

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shadow of a doubt as to the substantial guilt of Governor Eyre. Efforts were subsequently made to restore the discredited Governor to the public service, but naturally and justly, these were unsuccessful.

On a dispassionate view of the case, few will be prepared to deny now that Mr. Bright was on the side of truth and humanity in regard to this important question. It is monstrous to suppose that Governor Eyre will be acquitted at the bar of history for deeds which were only worthy of the Dark Ages. We may, in fact, be doing the Dark Ages an injustice in this matter. Mr. Carlyle, carrying out the doctrines of his 'Discourse on the Nigger Question,' defended Mr. Eyre, but the language in which he did so caused the great bulk of his warmest admirers keen regret. Despotism and strength were his maxims of government, and the 'strong' man—even were he entirely destitute of the divine sentiments of justice and humanity—won his admiration. With such principles, it is not surprising that Mr. Carlyle became the vindicator of Governor Eyre. Posterity will turn over, with averted eyes, this page in the history of the philosopher of Chelsea.

The closest and most intimate of Mr. Bright's personal and political friendships was severed by death on the 2nd of April, 1865. On that day, Richard Cobden, one of the finest and best of Englishmen, passed away. Not a month before, Mr. Bright had visited his friend at Midhurst; and as they strolled through the lovely Sussex scenery together, Mr. Cobden, pointing to a little church in the distance, said, 'My poor boy lies there, and I shall soon be with him.' Mr. Bright says he little thought how soon, when a few days afterwards he went up to London. Mr. Cobden was anxious to take part in the discussion on the Canadian fortifications, and the proposed heavy expenditure of public money, which he severely condemned. The March of 1865 was a bitter month, and he was stricken by the cold, and fatally stricken. Ten days later his complaint became greatly aggravated, and on the 2nd of April he died. Mr. Bright observed many years afterwards, 'It was a circumstance somewhat singular and very affecting to my mind, that on the very day when President Lincoln and the Northern forces entered the city of Richmond, and when, in point of fact, the slave confederacy was vanquished and at an end,—on that very day, on that very Sunday, that 2nd of April in the year 1865, the spirit of my friend left its earthly tenement, and took its way to another, and to him, doubtless, a brighter world.'

'Richard Cobden—whose death was deeply mourned both

in this country and in France—came of an old family of Sussex yeomen, and was born at the farm-house of Dunford, near Midhurst, June 3, 1804. Educated at the grammar school at Midhurst, on the death of his father he was sent to London, where he served an apprenticeship in a Manchester warehouse, afterwards becoming a traveller for the firm. In 1830 he entered into partnership with a firm of Lancashire calico printers, and his successful management of the firm brought large profits. He visited the Continent in 1834, and the United States in the following year. On his return he contributed, as remarked in a previous chapter, letters on political and economical topics to the *Manchester Times*, and also published a pamphlet entitled, 'England, Ireland, and America, by a Manchester Manufacturer.' He wrote on behalf of peace, retrenchment, non-intervention, and free trade, and followed up his earlier efforts by another pamphlet on 'Russia,' in which he forcibly stated his views on the Eastern Question. Shortly afterwards began the Anti-Corn-Law campaign, which we have already described at length. Mr. Cobden first sat for Stockport in 1841, and afterwards for the West Riding of Yorkshire, and at a latter period for Rochdale. When Lord Palmerston came into office, he offered Mr. Cobden the Presidency of the Board of Trade, with a seat in the Cabinet, but the offer was declined. In 1859, however, he accepted the important mission to Paris, where he had the chief direction of the Commercial Treaty with France. With rare disinterestedness, he declined all public reward for his services, an act of abnegation the more honourable to him, seeing that all this time his pecuniary affairs were in a somewhat embarrassed condition, owing to the depressed state of his American investments. It was proposed to raise a public subscription for him, but this he declined, and happily it became unnecessary in consequence of an improvement in the share market. As Sir Robert Peel did with regard to the Corn Laws, so Mr. Gladstone unstintedly gave the credit of the Commercial Treaty of 1860 to Mr. Cobden.

The character of Mr. Cobden was simple and most exemplary. The Bishop of Oxford, writing upon his death, said: 'I feel his loss deeply. I think it is a great national loss. His gentleness of nature, the tenderness and frankness of his affections, his exceeding modesty, his love of truth, and his ready and kindly sympathy—these invested him with an unusual charm for me. As a public speaker, Mr. Cobden had not the fire, the energy, and the eloquence of Mr. Bright; but he had remarkably persuasive powers of his own. His delivery was

earnest and impressive, his language unusually clear and well-chosen, his appeals to the reason of his listeners weighty and well-directed, and his power of argument singularly sustained and elastic. He had the power, as one critic has said, of winning converts, while overwhelming adversaries.'

On the day following his death, the great loss which the country had sustained was made known to the House of Commons by Lord Palmerston. Mr. Cobden's name, said his lordship, would be for ever engraved on the most interesting pages of the history of the country; and he was sure there was not one in the House who did not feel the deepest regret that they had lost one of its brightest ornaments, and that the country had been deprived of one of her most useful servants. Mr. Disraeli followed with an equally generous but more striking tribute to the deceased, whose closing words we must quote: 'There are some members of Parliament,' he said, 'who, though not present in the body, are still members of this House: independent of dissolutions, of the caprice of constituencies, even of the course of time. I think, Sir, Mr. Cobden was one of these men. I believe that when the verdict of posterity shall be recorded on his life and conduct, it will be said of him that he was, without doubt, the greatest political character the pure middle class of this country has yet produced—an ornament to the House of Commons, and an honour to England.'

Mr. Bright then rose, and speaking under the influence of profound emotion, said: 'Sir, I feel that I cannot address the House on this occasion; but every expression of sympathy which I have heard has been most grateful to my heart. But the time which has elapsed since, in my presence, the manliest and gentlest spirit that ever tenanted or quitted a human form took its flight, is so short, that I dare not even attempt to give utterance to the feelings by which I am oppressed. I shall leave to some calmer moment, when I may have an opportunity of speaking before some portion of my countrymen, the lesson which I think may be learned from the life and character of my friend. I have only to say that after twenty years of most intimate and almost brotherly friendship with him, I little knew how much I loved him until I found that I had lost him.'

These few sentences were spoken with great difficulty, and at their close Mr. Bright sank down into his seat, overwhelmed with grief.

That calmer moment, when the speaker hoped to have an opportunity of enforcing the great lesson of Mr. Cobden's

career, did not come until twelve years later, when Mr. Bright unveiled the statue raised to the memory of his friend at Bradford. This was on the 25th of July, 1877. On that occasion he briefly sketched Mr. Cobden's life, and described him as one of the best and noblest Englishmen of our time. The grand result which has followed the repeal of the Corn Laws, Mr. Bright thus eloquently touched upon: 'Now, if you cast your eyes over the globe, what is it you see? Look at Canada, look at the United States, whether on the Atlantic seaboard or on the Pacific slope; look at Chili; look at the Australian colonies; look at the great and rich province of Bengal; look on the shores of the Black Sea and the Baltic: wherever the rain falls, wherever the sun shines, wherever there are markets and granaries and harvest-fields, there are men and women everywhere gathering that which comes to this country for the sustenance of our people; and our fleets traverse every sea, and visit every port, and bring us the food which only about thirty years ago the laws of this civilized and Christian country denied to its people. You find it in Holy Writ, that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." We have put Holy Writ into an Act of Parliament, and since then of that fulness every man and woman and little child in this country may freely and abundantly partake.'

Mr. Bright then referred to the profound grief with which Mr. Cobden viewed the policy of England in the Crimean war; to the great work he did in connection with the French Treaty; and to the great sorrow which the American civil war occasioned him—though he always believed that the result of the war would be slavery abolished, and the consolidation of the Republic—still one and indivisible—as the advocate of peace and the promoter of civilization. Then came the lesson of the great reformer's whole career:—

'I have lately been reading a new poem which has interested me very much—a poem called *The Epic of Hades*. Many of you may never have heard of it; most of you may not have seen it. It is, as I view it, another gem added to the wealth of the poetry of our language. In that poem the author says—

"For knowledge is a steep which few may climb,
While duty is a path which all may tread."

I think it will be admitted by those who know anything of the life of Mr. Cobden that he trod what he believed to be the path of duty, and trod it with a firm and unfaltering footstep; and when I look upon this statue which is now before us, so like him, and so spotless, as was his name and character, I will say that I trust his following of the path of duty will have many imitators in this district; and that from this stainless marble, and from those voiceless lips, there may be taught a perpetual lesson to many generations of the intelligent and industrious men of this district of our country.'

'But let me add, that this which you have erected to-day, or which is erected in your midst, is by no means the greatest monument that has been built up to him. There is one far grander, and of wider significance. There is not a homestead in the country in which there is not added comfort from his labours, —not a cottage the dwellers in which have not steadier employment, higher wages, and a more solid independence. This is his enduring monument. He worked for these ends, and for these great purposes, and he worked even almost to the very day when the lamp of life went out. He is gone; but his character, his deeds, his life, his example, remain a possession to us his countrymen. And let this be said of him for generations to come, as long as the great men of England are spoken of in the English language; let it be said of him that Richard Cobden gave the labours of a life that he might confer upon his countrymen perfect freedom of industry, and with it, not that blessing only, but its attendant blessings of plenty and of peace.'

There were those who wished Mr. Cobden to be interred with public honours in Westminster Abbey; but, in accordance with his own request, he was laid to rest in the churchyard of West Lavington, near his own residence, and beside the remains of his only son, whose premature death had greatly and seriously affected him. Such a funeral was quite in accord with the utterly unostentatious character of the man. The melancholy ceremony took place on the 7th of April, 1865. Deputations attended from many of the large towns; and in addition to the many private mourners present, the House of Commons and the Crown were alike represented. Before the family and the intimate friends left the house, a touching incident, which Mr. Bright himself has preserved, occurred. 'Standing by me,' he said, in the address from which we have already quoted, 'and leaning on the coffin, was his sorrowing daughter, one whose attachment to her father seems to have been a passion scarcely equalled amongst daughters. She said, "My father used to like me very much to read to him the Sermon on the Mount." His own life was to a large extent—I speak it with reverence and with hesitation—a sermon based upon that best, that greatest of all sermons. His was a life of perpetual self-sacrifice.'

The funeral was conducted with a total absence of parade and pomp. A plain hearse, followed by four plain mourning coaches, constituted the whole *cortège*, the remaining carriages being those which had brought the London visitors from the station, or those of friends and neighbours. At the entrance to the churchyard the coffin was taken from the hearse, the pall was thrown over it, and the mourners ranged themselves on each side. The pall was borne by twelve of the deceased's political and personal friends—viz., Mr. Bright, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Villiers, Mr. George Wilson, Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Moffatt, Mr. T. B. Potter, Mr. A. W. Paulton, Mr. H. Ash-

worth, Mr. Bazley, Mr. W. Evans, and Mr. T. Thomasson. Besides the members of Mr. Cobden's family, and private mourners, there were also present Lords Alfred and Clarence Paget, Lord Kinnaird, Sir C. Wentworth Dilke, Mr. Gilpin, Mr. Ewart, Mr. Stansfeld, Sir J. Shelley, Mr. W. E. Forster, Sir F. Crossley, Sir Colman O'Loghlen, Mr. E. Baines, Sir S. M. Peto, Sir P. O'Brien, Sir Robert Clifton, Mr. Shaw Lefevre, Mr. P. A. Taylor, Mr. E. Miall, Prof. Fawcett, the Rev. Newman Hall, Mr. Samuel Morley, Mr. Robertson Gladstone, Dr. Hook (Dean of Chichester), Mr. Elihu Burritt, and Mr. Adams, the American Minister.

After the service in the church, the coffin was borne to the grave, the scene here being most impressive. The concluding portion of the burial service was now read by the Rev. Mr. Currie, with an emotion which was evidently felt by the whole of the mourners and distinguished circle that stood around. Mr. Bright was overcome with grief, and wept almost aloud; other friends standing by his side were also deeply moved; and Mr. Gladstone's pale face wore an expression of sad and deepened gravity as with much earnestness he followed the clergyman from his prayer-book. As the solemn words 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust' were pronounced, and the handful of earth was heard to rattle on the coffin-lid, there was a rush of friends to the opening of the vault, and a struggle to catch a farewell look at what was about to be shut in from them for ever. The mourners then turned from the scene, and the funeral of one of the world's benefactors was over.

But, save for the members of Mr. Cobden's own family, he who felt the keenest anguish that day was the statesman who had been the close companion of the dead in his great and arduous labours. Not always, in the presence of the dead—though they may have been good, wise, and illustrious—can men rise to that calm height wherein they perceive the blessedness of death, and can say, 'They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.' Mr. Bright must have felt this on the death of Richard Cobden. A strong tie had been broken, a strong bond of affection and sympathy been snapped asunder. Where two had journeyed together, and taken counsel together, one was henceforth to travel alone.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REFORM CAMPAIGN OF 1866.

Lord Russell and the Reform Question in 1865.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Examination of Ministerial Policy.—Position of Reform.—Representation abroad and at home.—Rights of the English people.—Election at Rochdale.—Dissolution of Parliament.—Mr. Bright's Address to his Constituents.—Return of Messrs. Scholefield and Bright.—Vigorous Speech by Mr. Bright.—Smart Attack on Mr. Disraeli.—A fine Peroration.—Death of Lord Palmerston.—Speeches of Mr. Bright at Birmingham and Rochdale.—The Session of 1866.—Meeting of Parliament.—Discussion on the Cattle Plague.—Mr. Gladstone introduces the Reform Bill.—Mr. Bright supports it.—His Reply to the Opponents of Reform.—Humorous Description of Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe.—The 'Adullamites.'—Effect of the Speech.—Reform Meetings in the Country.—Debate on the Second Reading of the Bill.—Elaborate Speech by Mr. Bright.—The Division.—Exciting Scene.—Defeat of the Government on Lord Dunkellin's Motion.—Resignation of the Ministry.—Lord Derby accedes to Office.—Reform Agitation in London and the Provinces.—Great Demonstrations at Birmingham.—Mr. Bright on the Derby Ministry—Meeting at Manchester.—Enthusiastic Reception of Mr. Bright.—He visits Leeds and Glasgow.—Stirring Addresses on the Reform Question.

It was naturally to be expected that when Lord Russell acceded to office upon the death of Lord Palmerston, towards the close of 1865, the question of Reform would be dealt with, and that in no perfunctory spirit. Lord Derby twitted the new Prime Minister with his old character of 'Finality John,' alleging that he had always understood he would not disturb the settlement of 1832; but Lord Russell had long felt that a further and a large extension of the suffrage was inevitable. This question of Parliamentary Reform was one of great difficulty, and many predicted that it would involve the fate of the Administration; but the Russell Ministry lost no time in avowing that they considered the immediate proposal of such a measure was due to their own consistency, to the just expectations of the country, and, moreover, to the obligations of political morality. The Reform struggle which now ensued is a memorable one in our political and Parliamentary annals; it gave rise to a display of eloquence on both sides of the House of Commons unsurpassed even during the great historic period of 1832.

Before dealing with the measure of the Russell-Gladstone

Government, however, there are some preliminary events which demand our attention. In January, 1865, Mr. Bright paid a visit to his constituents at Birmingham, being received with remarkable enthusiasm. On the 2nd the new Birmingham Exchange was opened. The hon. member, speaking at the luncheon subsequently given, expressed his belief that manufacturers and merchants, as a rule, had generally been either too modest or not sufficiently acquainted with their true position. From the commercial classes, and not from monarchs or great lords of the soil, had come whatever there was of social, or civil, or religious freedom to the inhabitants of this country. 'My opinion is,' he added, 'looking at the course of history, that merchants and manufacturers, in the aggregate, are gradually becoming much more important in the world than warriors and statesmen—and even than monarchs themselves, for it is obvious to me that the power of these heretofore great authorities is waning, and that in every part of the world the power of the great industrial interest is sensibly increasing.' Dealing with the subject of strikes, Mr. Bright said he was not sure that they should be altogether abandoned. 'I call the power to strike among workmen a reserve power, which, under certain circumstances, it may be their duty to exercise. At the same time, I think that, in my experience, in nineteen cases out of twenty, at least, the exercise of that power may be fairly questioned; and in many of these cases it has been a merciless curse to those by whom it has been exercised.'

On the 18th of January, Messrs. Scholefield and Bright addressed their constituents in the Town Hall, when there were some five thousand persons present. The Mayor, Mr. H. Wiggin, presided. Mr. Bright, in his lengthy speech, dealt almost exclusively with the Reform question. At the outset, he referred to the escape we had had from a war on account of Denmark, which he had strongly condemned and deprecated a year before. Whether England owed the chances of peace to the Queen, the younger members of the Cabinet as led by Mr. Gladstone, or to the moneyed interests of the country, he was equally grateful. But the time had been one of great danger, seeing that the aged statesmen at the head of the Government —Lords Palmerston and Russell—were the men who had been mainly responsible for the Crimean war. During the past session, when the question was discussed, the Government exhibited its usual feebleness, and the Opposition its usual folly. Mr. Bright observed that only twelve years ago Lord Russell

pledged England to defend all weaker nations, and to take care that nobody was molested in any part of the globe; and if they were to take Lord Palmerston's speeches, they would probably find a cartload of rhetorical rubbish of the same character. But notwithstanding that he (Mr. Bright) and Mr. Cobden had been reviled for holding a different view, all this warlike policy had now been entirely abandoned and overturned. The whole thing had gone to that receptacle to which all lies and superstitions would ultimately go.

Taking the events of the last few years, he was not much mistaken in pronouncing the theory of the balance of power to be pretty nearly dead and buried. 'This balance of power,' said Mr. Bright, amid loud cheering, 'rises up before me when I think of it as a ghastly phantom which during one hundred and seventy years, whilst it has been worshipped in this country, has loaded the nation with debt and with taxes, has sacrificed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Englishmen, has desolated the homes of millions of families, and has left us, as the great result of the profligate expenditure which it has caused, a doubled peerage at one end of the social scale, and far more than a doubled pauperism at the other. I am very glad to be here to-night, amongst other things to be able to say that we may rejoice that this foul idol—fouler than any heathen tribe ever worshipped—has at last been thrown down, and that there is one superstition less which has its hold upon the minds of English statesmen and of English people.' This being so, there was no necessity whatever for the constant increase in our military expenditure, which was already double that thought necessary by the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel.

Coming to the great question of the day, that of Reform, Mr. Bright observed that it was not dead, and he thus enforced the necessity for dealing with the subject:—

'An Englishman, if he goes to the Cape, can vote; if he goes further, to Australia, to the nascent empires of the New World, he can vote; if he goes to the Canadian Confederation, he can vote; and if he goes to those grandest colonies of England not now dependent upon the English Crown, there, in twenty free, and, in the whole, in thirty-five different States, he can give his free and independent vote. (*Cheers.*) It is only in his own country, on his own soil, where he was born, the very soil which he has enriched with his labour and with the sweat of his brow, that he is denied this right which in every other community of Englishmen in the world would be freely accorded to him. (*Much cheering.*)

'I agree very much with the gentlemen of the Torquay dinner, not as to the quality of the dinner—(*laughter*)—but as to that apparition which seemed to alarm even their formidable and robust digestion. (*Laughter.*) This apparition

is not a pleasant one. This state of things I hold to be dangerous, and one that cannot last. It may happen, as it happened thirty years ago, that the eyes of the five millions all through the United Kingdom may be fixed with an intense glare upon the doors of Parliament; it was so in the years 1831–32. There are men in this room who felt then, and know now, that it required but an accident—but one spark to the train, and this country would have been in the throes of revolution; and these gentlemen who are so alarmed now lest a man who lives in a £10 house in a county, and a £6 house in a borough, should have a vote, would have repented in sackcloth and ashes that they had ever said one word or given one vote against Lord Grey's Reform Bill. (*Applause.*) I say that accidents always are happening, not to individuals only, but to nations. It was the accident of the French Revolution of 1830 that preceded that great movement in this country. You may have accidents again, but I do not hold that to be statesmanship which allows the security, the tranquillity, the loyalty of a people to be disturbed by any accident which they are able to control. (*Cheers.*) If the five millions should once unitedly fix their eyes with an intense look upon the door of that House where my hon. friend and I expect so soon to enter, I would ask who shall say them nay? Not the mace upon the table of the House; not the four hundred easy gentlemen of the House of Lords who lounge in and out of that decorated chamber; not the dozen gentlemen who call themselves statesmen, and who meet in Downing Street—(*loud laughter*)—perhaps not even those more appalling and more menacing personages who have their lodgment higher up Whitehall. I say there is no power in this country, as opinion now stands, and as combination is now possible, there is no power in this country that can say "Nay" for one single week to the five millions, if they are intent upon making their way within the doors of Parliament. This is the apparition which frightens the gentlemen at Torquay.' (*Cheers.*)

But the apparition gave trouble in other quarters to which he (the speaker) would pay more respect. He then referred to Mr. Charles Buxton's plan of doubling the votes of a man who lived in a house above £10 rental, and Lord Grey's plan of the cumulative vote—both of which he strongly condemned. Referring to the latter, Mr. Bright excited great laughter by saying that he had heard of donkey-races where the last wins. So in this case, the slowest animal would run off with the prize. Having touched upon some other fancy propositions by Lord Grey, the hon. member observed that he did propose some things which were right. He would extend the suffrage, and he would abolish many, if not all, of the very small boroughs.

After an argument in favour of the rights of majorities, Mr. Bright said he wanted to know whence all this fear of the people came. It did not exist elsewhere, and he gave illustrations of this in connection with the exercise of the franchise. In the State of New York alone 700,000 men voted at the last Presidential election, and throughout the whole of the Free States not less than 4,000,000 votes were given, and they were all given with the most perfect order and tranquillity throughout the whole of the States. But some feared the legislative results of a wide extension of the franchise, and the hon. mem-

ber showed the groundlessness of this, citing South Africa, Australia, the British North American provinces, and the States of the American Union, where life and property were just as secure as in this country, and where education was more extended, and the religious and general interests of the population better looked after. There was a great deal of talk about 'our institutions,' which were only regarded as safe so long as they were in the hands of the institutions themselves. 'If the great patronage of our vast expenditure is to be dispensed perpetually amongst the ruling class, the ruling class as a matter of course will take extreme care of the patronage. There is something very sacred in that patronage. There are many families in this country with long lines of ancestry, who, if patronage were curtailed, would feel very much as some of us feel in Lancashire when the American war has stopped our supplies of cotton. They look upon patronage as a holy thing, not to be touched by profane hands. I have no doubt they have in their minds the saying of a great friend of mine, though he is an imaginary character—I mean Hosea Biglow, the author of the *Biglow Papers*. He says—

> "It is something like a fulfilling the prophecies,
> When all the first families have all the best offices."

But, sir, I protest against this theory. I protest against the theory that the people of this country have an unreasonable and violent desire to shake or overturn institutions which they may not theoretically approve of.' Either the institutions which people were so much afraid of were in themselves unpopular or hurtful, or else the people themselves were grossly slandered.

Mr. Bright went on to remark that the House of Commons was in reality the only guarantee we had for freedom. The noblemen and gentlemen at Torquay did not know apparently that it was only because of this representative body—which stood between them and monarchical or aristocratic despotism—that the institution they were themselves so fond of was safe and permanent at all. Representation was found in the various countries of Europe, America, and Australia; and Englishmen, everywhere but at home, were received into the bosom of this great permanent undying institution, this safeguard for national, for human freedom. The speaker then arrived at his peroration:—

'Now, sir, I would change all this. I speak out of no hostility to any class or any institution. That man who proposes to exclude permanently five

millions of his countrymen from the right which the constitution of his country makes sacred in his eyes, I say that is the man that separates Englishmen into two nations, and makes it impossible that we should be wholly or permanently a contented people. I demand, then, this, which is but the right of our constitution, that the House of Commons shall be made freely and fairly to represent the Commons and the people of the United Kingdom. England has long been famous for the enjoyment of personal freedom by her people. They are free to think, they are free to speak, they are free to write; and England has been famed of late years, and is famed now the world over, for the freedom of her industry and the greatness and the freedom of her commerce. I want to know then why it is that her people should not be free to vote. ("*Hear, hear,*" *and applause.*) Who is there that will meet me on this platform, or will stand upon any platform, and will dare to say, in the hearing of an open meeting of his countrymen, that these millions for whom I am now pleading are too degraded, too vicious, and too destructive to be entrusted with the elective franchise? (*Cheers.*) I at least will never thus slander my countrymen. I claim for them the right of admission, through their representatives, into the most ancient and most venerable Parliament which at this hour exists among men; and when they are thus admitted, and not till then, it may be truly said that England, the august mother of free nations, herself is free.'(*Loud applause.*)'

On the death of Mr. Cobden, there was a wish on the part of his Rochdale constituents to offer the seat to Mr. Bright, but the latter remained faithful to his friends at Birmingham. Mr. T. B. Potter was consequently selected by the Rochdale Liberals, and in supporting his candidature, Mr. Bright said that if he might speak for him who was here no longer, the choice was one which would have been grateful to him. He also thus alluded to Mr. Brett, the Conservative candidate: 'These men are all in favour of the good that has been done by men who have given years of their lives—men you have encouraged from youth to manhood, in the spread of just principles and the establishment of wise laws, and who have done all this in the teeth of the combined opposition of all the Mr. Bretts in England. Then the Mr. Bretts come forward, and say that the repeal of the Corn Laws was a good thing, and the French Treaty a valuable measure, and the freedom of the press a great blessing; but still Mr. Brett stands with Lord Derby; and if you will ask him about any one single question—not of the past, but of the future—of the next twenty years, you will have to fight as great a fight for every future good against the Mr. Bretts, just as you have fought against his class and order of mind during the last twenty years.' The Liberal candidate was elected by a large majority, the numbers being—for Mr. Potter, 646; Mr. Brett, 496.

Parliament was dissolved early in July, and Mr. Bright immediately issued his address to the electors of Birmingham. 'The Administration,' he wrote, 'which in 1859 climbed into

office under the pretence of its devotion to the question of Parliamentary Reform, has violated its solemn pledges. Its chiefs have purposely betrayed the cause they undertook to defend, and the less eminent members of it have tamely acquiesced in that betrayal. The Ministry have for six years held office, which, but for promises they made, and which they have broken, they could not have obtained possession of even for a day. . . . The Parliament is about to expire—the Ministry will soon undergo such changes as will make it totter to its fall; but the question of Reform lives, and at this moment in the eyes of its opponents takes a more distinct shape than at any other period since the passing of the bill of 1832. I trust that the result of the coming general election will show that, notwithstanding the treachery of official statesmen, and the indifference of the expiring Parliament, the course of freedom, based on a true representation of the nation, is advancing with an irresistible force to its final triumph.'

The nomination at Birmingham took place on the 12th of July, in the Town Hall, which was densely crowded. Mr. Scholefield was proposed by Mr. Ald. Phillips, and seconded by Mr. Jaffray; and Mr. Bright was proposed by Mr. George Dixon, and seconded by Mr. Ald. Manton. The Mayor, having first asked, amid much laughter, whether there was any other candidate, declared the old members duly elected. Mr. Scholefield first returned thanks.

Mr. Bright then rose, and delivered a speech bristling with sharp points and phrases. The Reform question, he said, was the question of the hour, but the Prime Minister, in his address to the electors of Tiverton, said nothing about it, which was wise, considering what he had done in regard to it. The Tories were in favour of what they called a well-balanced proposition of Reform—which meant, so exactly balanced that nobody could tell that the scale was in the least degree altered, and that everything should be left exactly as it was. At the present time the number of county electors was nearly half as much again as the number of borough electors. Speaking of the opponents of Reform, he said,—'Reform is ahead, and they cannot conceal it; they cannot deny it. It is, as the poet has said of death,

"The doom they dread, yet dwell upon."

How do they now try to avoid this reform? They try to alarm the middle class. They tell the shopkeeper, for example, that the artisan will outvote him. They tell the ten-pounder

to be very much afraid of the nine-pounder,—he is very doubtful; and the eight-pounder still worse; and when you get to the seven-pounders and six-pounders, the consequences may be fatal. (*Laughter*). In point of fact, their whole object now is to set class against class.' (*Cheering.*)

Perhaps the most effective passage in Mr. Bright's address was this brilliant attack on Mr. Disraeli:—

'The complaint now is, and the danger, that the whole nation—20,000,000 persons, men, women, and children—have no direct representation in the House of Commons of a country whose great foundation of government is the representative system and the representative principle. Well now, what is the answer which is made to this claim? It is this: the Prime Minister answers it by contemptuous silence; he has not referred to it in the long and carefully written address which he has issued, not only to the electors of Tiverton, but to the electors of the United Kingdom. Well, but what says Lord Derby, speaking through the mouth of his prophet Disraeli? (*Laughter.*) Why, he says, "lateral extension." He says to the great body of the working men – to these five millions, "It is true you are shut out; the Reform Bill was not satisfactory; the representation may be amended; your complaint is just; and we will admit—somebody else." (*Laughter and applause.*) Now, Mr. Disraeli is a man who does what may be called the conjuring for his party. (*Laughter.*) He is what, amongst a tribe of Red Indians, would be called the "mystery man." (*Renewed laughter.*) He invents phrases for them—and one of the phrases, the last and the newest, is this lateral extension of the franchise. Now, Mr. Disraeli is a man of brains, of genius, of great capacity for action, of a wonderful tenacity of purpose, and of a rare courage. He would have been a statesman if his powers had been directed by any noble principle or idea. (*Laughter and applause.*) But, unhappily, he prefers a temporary and worthless distinction as the head of a decaying party, fighting for impossible ends, to the priceless memories of services rendered to his country—(*cheers*)—and to freedom, on which only in our age an enduring fame can be built up. (*Loud cheers.*) Now, what is meant by lateral extension? It means this: that all below £10 householders are not to be admitted. Well, the present law admits all that are above £10 householders, and therefore it can only include those not now included, a few men, inconsiderable in the whole number, who are lodgers, or who are brothers or sons of housekeepers whose names are already on the register; and therefore it is quite clear that this is a miserable pretence and a delusion, and an insult of the most glaring kind to the great body of the people.' (*Loud cheers.*)

Even at this distance of time, and when Lord Beaconsfield has passed away, it will be admitted that there are many truthful lines in the above portrait sketched of him by Mr. Bright. The close of the speech of the hon. member for Birmingham was very fine, and was received with almost a frenzy of enthusiasm. 'I believe the time is coming,' he observed—'nay, that we are upon its very threshold—when a large number of those hitherto excluded will be admitted, and we shall feel more than ever before that we are one nation and one people. Many of you have stood, as I have often stood, on the seashore, in an hour of quiet and of calm. No tempest drives the waves; the

wind is but a whisper; and yet the tide comes on as by some latent and mysterious power. The loiterers on the beach are driven from point to point as the waves advance, and at length the whole vast basin of the ocean seems filled to the brim. So on this question: there is no violence, nor even menace of force; but opinion grows, its tide moves on; opposition, ignorant on the one hand, insolent on the other, falls back; and shortly we shall see barriers thrown down, privilege and monopoly swept away, a people enfranchised, and the measure of their freedom full. You have honoured me this morning by committing this great cause in part to my keeping. I may defend it feebly, I may fall from the ranks before it is won, but of one thing you may be sure, I shall never betray it.' A subsequent speaker well described this address as a splendid oration.

At the close of the general election it was found that there was a Liberal majority of 77. Within three months, however, of this event the popular Premier had passed away. Lord Palmerston died on the 18th of October, 1865, being only within two days of completing his eighty-first year. By his death the chief official stumbling-block in the way of the introduction of a Liberal Reform Bill was removed.

In December, Mr. Bright again addressed a great meeting of the inhabitants of Birmingham on the Reform question, concluding his address as follows: 'I speak not the language of party. I feel myself above the level of party. I speak, as I have ever endeavoured to speak, on behalf of the unenfranchised, the almost voiceless millions of my countrymen. Their claim is just, and it is constitutional. It will be heard. It cannot be rejected. To the outward eye monarchs and Parliaments seem to rule with an absolute and unquestioned sway, but—and I quote the words which one of our old Puritan poets has left for us—

> "There is on earth a yet auguster thing,
> Veiled though it be, than Parliament or King."

That auguster thing is the tribunal which God has set up in the consciences of men. It is before that tribunal that I am now permitted humbly to plead, and there is something in my heart—a small but an exultant voice—which tells me I shall not plead in vain.' Mr. Bright, in this speech, incidentally spoke strongly in favour of land reform and Church disestablishment for Ireland.

On the 3rd of the following month of January, Mr. Bright

also addressed a Reform meeting at Rochdale. He remarked that he had seen a paragraph cut from an Indian newspaper, which, describing the immensely extensive household of a native prince, stated that there were hundreds of what were called prophesying Brahmins in his establishment; and he thus utilized this fact: 'A Brahmin is a Hindoo priest, and is of great authority. Now, I have no doubt whatever that there are prophesying Brahmins in the great Whig house somewhere, and I dare say they are foretelling all sorts of evils that may come from the passing of this bill. I venture to foretell Lord Russell that their counsels, if followed, will be not only perilous, but I believe they will be fatal counsels to him and his Government. There are in an old poem that I read with great pleasure many years ago—the *Faery Queen*—two lines which I think may teach us something in our present position—

> "No fort so fencible, no wall so strong,
> But that continual battery may rive."

I feel certain that the fort of selfishness and monopoly cannot be held for ever, and that the walls of privilege cannot through all time resist the multitude that are gathering to the assault. In all the nations of the world of this day, I believe the powers of good are gaining steadily on the powers of evil. I think it is eminently so in this country. Let us take courage, then. We are endeavouring by constitutional means to compass a great constitutional end; to make Parliament not only the organ of the will, but the honest and faithful guardian of the interest of all classes in the country. It is a great and noble purpose which we have set ourselves to achieve, but it is a purpose which cannot fail, if we are true to it and to ourselves.'

Parliament met on the 1st of February, 1866, but before the question of Reform could be proceeded with, two subjects of pressing importance occupied the attention of the House. These were the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland and the Cattle Plague. Mr. Bright spoke at length on both these questions, but his observations with regard to Ireland we shall reserve for separate treatment. On the 12th of February Sir George Grey introduced the Government Bill for suppressing the cattle plague, whose ravages had become formidable and alarming. A long debate occurred upon the principle of compensating the owners of cattle which might be slaughtered under the powers of the bill for their losses. Mr. Bright said that in the present emergency he quite agreed in the absolute necessity, so far as farms were concerned, of enforcing a rigid

isolation; but he differed from the proposal in the bill which left the power of widespread and indiscriminate slaughter to the local authorities. With compensation, he believed that the slaughter would be unnecessary and monstrous in amount. It was contrary to the principle adopted by Parliament on past occasions of public suffering to vote money out of taxes to remedy a misfortune of this kind; and it was a grievance which every taxpayer would complain of, if his money were applied to the compensation of well-to-do farmers and rich landowners who might suffer from the affliction. If that principle were carried out, it would tend to greater improvidence on the part of farmers than in past times. They would fancy that they were a class or order in the community which had especial claims upon the House—an opinion which, twenty years ago, was destructive of their independence and energy; and to encourage such an opinion among them would be most unfortunate.

Mr. Stuart Mill in the main agreed with Mr. Bright. Considerable changes were made in the bill, the Government withdrawing the clause imposing a 'cattle rate,' and throwing the whole charge on the county and borough rate; and the measure rapidly passed through both Houses and received the Royal assent.

On the 12th of March, in a densely crowded House, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gladstone) brought forward the Government Reform Bill. It proposed first to create an occupation franchise in counties, including houses beginning at £14 rental and reaching up to £50; secondly, to introduce into counties the provision which copyholders and leaseholders within Parliamentary boroughs then possessed for the purpose of county votes; thirdly, a savings bank franchise would be introduced; and, fourthly, it was proposed to place compound householders on the same footing as ratepayers. It was proposed to abolish tax-and ratepaying clauses, and to have one definite figure of clear annual value, which would admit a great number of persons then excluded from the franchise. These were the main features of the measure. The total number of new voters would be 400,000. Mr. Gladstone made a fervent appeal to the House to pass the bill; or, if issue were taken adversely upon it, he hoped it would be directly.

Debates of unusual power and eloquence arose in connection with this bill. It was opposed in the outset by Mr. Laing, Mr. Horsman, and Mr. Lowe, but welcomed by such tried friends of the working classes as Mr. Bright and Mr. Fawcett. The following passage from Mr. Lowe's speech on the introduction of

the bill gave serious and lasting offence to the great body of the working classes of the country. 'You have had the opportunity,' he said, 'of knowing some of the constituencies of this country; and I ask, if you want venality, ignorance, drunkenness, and the means of intimidation—if you want impulsive, unreflecting, and violent people, where will you go to look for them—to the top or to the bottom?'

Mr. Bright spoke on the second night of the debate. He rose, he said, neither to defend himself from the unusual attack which had been made upon him by Mr. Lowe or Mr. Horsman, nor to enter into an elaborate defence of the bill. But one thing in the bill was highly satisfactory, viz., that both in what it did and the manner in which it proposed to do it, it was distinct, clear, without any tricks—without semblance of giving anything in one clause, and then under a feeling of alarm withdrawing it in the next.

There were reasons why the House should readily agree to pass the bill. The proposal to give a vote to every occupier of a £7 house in a borough assimilated our law in this respect to the law of Scotland, where there were no ratepaying clauses; and the proposition, regarded in the light of the Reform Act of 1832, would ensure that efficiency which the people expected from that great measure when it passed both Houses of Parliament. Mr. Lowe could not refuse his assent to this, because if there were one thing except the classical times of antiquity to which he was more devoted than another, it was clearly the bill of 1832. Mr. Bright went on to say that when the present bill reached the Committee, he hoped to see the county franchise reduced from £14 to £10, as proposed by Lord Derby; and if the Opposition wished to obtain a triumph over the Government, and at the same time show their consistency, they would support such a proposition. As to the only point on which there was any great difference of opinion, the figure of the franchise in the boroughs, he (the speaker) should be very happy if it happened that the working classes, in great numbers, should reach an occupancy of £7, so that ultimately it might be even equal to a household suffrage in the country. This bill would not be final, but it would do for a time. It had been said that this bill was his bill, but he had not been able to find a point of the measure which he had recommended. He never was in favour of a £6 franchise, and would never have proposed it; he believed in a household franchise. But a £7 franchise was offered, and beggars could not be choosers. The £10 limit was regarded by some as the salvation of the

country, and all the present horrors arose because it was proposed to reduce the franchise in boroughs by £1 lower than was recommended by Mr. Henley and Mr. Walpole.

Mr. Bright condemned the savings-bank franchise, which he thought was the worst of all the fancy franchises ever proposed. He objected altogether to giving the franchise to one man, and shutting it out from another—that second man, it may be, being far more heroic than the other. The system was liable to the utmost inequality, and to a species of fraud which could not be prevented. He did not believe that so many working men as was estimated would be placed upon the register by this measure—the numbers were greatly exaggerated. With reference to the course taken in the debate on the bill by Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe, the hon. member commented on the announcement by Mr. Lowe in 1859 of the expediency of reducing the franchise, and said the right hon. gentleman must have a very short memory when he trifled with the House. He was afraid that when men changed their opinions after fifty years of age, there was not much chance of their turning back again. He could not with much hope appeal to Mr. Lowe, or to his colleague Mr. Horsman, and he did not know whether he could appeal to Lord Elcho, who, with the exception of the member for Salisbury (Mr. Marsh) was the only member on the Liberal side of the House who cheered the sentiments of the two right hon. gentlemen. What was the reason that gentlemen who had been holders of office took this course with regard to the Government bill? He did not complain of men who were fond of office, though he could never comprehend the reason they like it so much. Parodying a line or two of one of the most beautiful poems in the language, he might ask—

> 'For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
> That pleasing, anxious office e'er resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the Treasury,
> Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?'

What he complained of was that that which was deemed patriotism vanished with office; and there was a howl of despair because it was proposed to diminish the franchise in boroughs from £10 to £7. Mr. Bright then made this now memorable retort upon his opponents:—

'The right hon. gentleman below me (Mr. Horsman) said a little against the Government and a little against the bill, but had last night a field-night for an attack upon so humble an individual as myself. The right hon. gentleman is the first of the new party who has expressed his great grief, who

has retired into what may be called his political Cave of Adullam, and he has called about him every one that was in distress, and every one that was discontented. The right hon. gentleman has been anxious to form a party in this House. There is scarcely any one on this side of the House who is able to address the House with effect, or to take much part in our debates, whom he has not tried to bring over to his party or cabal; and at last the right hon. gentleman has succeeded in hooking the right hon. gentleman the member for Calne. (*Laughter.*) I know there was an opinion expressed many years ago by a member of the Treasury bench and of the Cabinet, that two men would make a party. When a party is formed of two men so amiable, so discreet, as the two right hon. gentlemen, we may hope to see for the first time in Parliament a party perfectly harmonious and distinguished by mutual and unbroken trust. (*Cheers and laughter.*) But there is one difficulty which it is impossible to remove. This party of two reminds me of the Scotch terrier, which was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail of it. (*Great laughter.*)'

Within the memory of the oldest member, the House was probably never so convulsed with laughter as at this description. But when the mirth had to some extent subsided, Mr. Bright returned to the charge, further transfixing his opponent Mr. Lowe, in a manner never to be forgotten.

'The right hon. member for Calne told us that he had some peculiar election experiences. There are men who make discord wherever they appear. (*Cheers.*) The right hon. gentleman on going down to Kidderminster got into some unpleasing altercation with somebody, and it ended with his having his head broken. (*Laughter.*) But I am happy to say, and the House will bear witness that, with regard to its power, that head is probably as strong now as before he took his leave of Kidderminster and went to Calne—a village in the west of England. The right hon. gentleman found on the list of electors at Calne a hundred and seventy-four names, of whom, according to the Blue Book, about seven were working men. I suppose three or four of them were probably keepers of shops, and some of those whom the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I think, improperly included in his list. When the right hon. member went down there, he found a tumult even more aggravated than at Kidderminster. They did not break his head, but they did something that in the eye of the law was much worse, for they shut up the police in the Town Hall, and the little mob of this little place had the whole game to themselves. The right hon. gentleman told us of the polypus, which takes its colour from the rock on which it lives, and he said that some hon. members take their colours from their constituencies. The constituency which the right hon. gentleman represents consists of a hundred and seventy-four men, seven of whom are working men; but the real constituent of the right hon. gentleman is a member of the other House of Parliament, and he could send in his butler or his groom, instead of the right hon. gentleman, to represent the borough. (*Laughter.*) I think in one sense—regarding the right hon. gentleman as an intellectual gladiator in this House—we are much indebted to the Marquis of Lansdowne that he did not do that.' (*Renewed laughter and cheers.*)

Mr. Bright next appealed to the patriotism of members, and exhorted them not to take that disparaging view of their countrymen which had been presented by Mr. Lowe and Mr. Marsh, who—presumably from their residence at the antipodes—

seemed to take a Botany Bay view of the character of the great bulk of their countrymen. Was it possible to do a more perilous thing than make it appear that there was a gulf that should not be passed by legislation between the highest and most powerful and a portion of the middle classes, and the great body of the working people who were really the heart of this great nation? Having enlarged upon the danger of resistance to so moderate a measure of enfranchisement, Mr. Bright observed, in conclusion, 'Now, Sir, I said at the beginning that I did not rise to defend this bill. I rose for the purpose of explaining it. It is not a bill which, if I had been consulted by its framers, I should have recommended. If I had been a Minister, it is not a bill which I should have consented to present to the House. I think it is not adequate to the occasion, and that its concessions are not sufficient. But I know the difficulties under which Ministries labour, and I know the disinclination of Parliament to do much in the direction of this question. I shall give it my support because, as far as it goes, it is a simple and honest measure, and because I believe, if it becomes law, it will give more solidity and duration to everything that is good in the constitution, and to everything that is noble in the character of the people of these realms.'

This speech by Mr. Bright, while keeping well within the bounds of Parliamentary decorum, was felt to be most effective and withering in its retorts upon the anti-Reform party on the Liberal benches. The epithet of 'Adullamites' clung to this party henceforward, and by this name only were they known. The effect of the speech on the house was quite extraordinary —especially that part of it in which Mr. Bright replied to Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe.*

* We cannot forbear quoting the following passage from a description of the scene furnished by a correspondent of the *Scotsman:* 'Brave, brawny, slow, self-possessed, the member for Birmingham positively revelled in his power, and smote his adversaries hip and thigh with the laughter of his audience. And it was all done so easily! No effort, no haste, no anger! The broad, comely, Saxon features were lit up by a genial and good-humoured smile; but otherwise, while the House roared, and every other sentence was the signal for a burst of laughter, prolonged beyond all usual limits of duration, the orator stood bland, calm, and unmoved. A gentle but expressive gesture of the right hand seemed to send forth winged words—banter, pleasantry, sarcasm—in one arrowy shower. Mr. Lowe could not help laughing. The grimmest Derbyites laughed as heartily as the youngest country squires. It was ungrateful of the Opposition to laugh so heartily at Mr. Lowe, for they had vociferously applauded his speech, and he has fairly set them up with arguments and fallacies for the session. Yet the truth must be told; and it is that they roared more vociferously at Mr. Bright's sallies against Mr. Lowe than even the hon. gentlemen below the gangway and around the right hon. gen-

Leave was given to bring in the bill, but Earl Grosvenor gave notice that on the second reading he should move an amendment to the effect that the House was of opinion that it was inconvenient to consider the bill for the reduction of the franchise until it had before it the whole scheme of the Government for the amendment of the representation of the people. Mr. Gladstone stated that the Government would not only resist this amendment, but would treat it as a vote of want of confidence.

In the meantime there was great agitation in the country, and meetings were held in many of the large towns in support of the Government measure. At Liverpool, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Duke of Argyll, and others attended a great Liberal demonstration called in defence of the scheme. Mr. Gladstone spoke with much force and eloquence, announcing that the Government staked their existence upon the bill. They had crossed the Rubicon, broken the bridge, and burned their boats behind them. A meeting was held at Birmingham, when a letter was read from Mr. Bright, in which he said, 'Parliament is never hearty for Reform, or for any good measure. It hated the Reform Bill of 1831 and 1832. It does not like the Franchise Bill now upon its table. It is to a large extent the offspring of landed power in the counties, and of tumult and corruption in the boroughs; and it would be strange if such a Parliament were in favour of freedom and of an honest representation of the people. But notwithstanding such a Parliament, this bill will pass if Birmingham and other towns do their duty.' After stigmatizing the opposition as 'a dirty conspiracy,' he continued: 'What should be done, and what must be done, under these circumstances? You know what your fathers did thirty-four years ago, and you know the result. The men who, in every speech they utter, insult the working men, describing them as a multitude given up to ignorance and vice, will be the first to yield when the popular will is loudly and resolutely expressed. If Parliament

tleman, which is saying a very great deal indeed Mr. Deputy-Speaker Dodson bit his lip, and in vain endeavoured to assume a look of unnatural and transcendent gravity. It was of no use! He was obliged to give way and laugh like the rest. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's face was lit up as if by forty smiles transmuted and condensed into one. Mr. Disraeli felt, perhaps, that Mr. Lowe's eye was upon him, and he was content to smile faintly and laugh with his eyes. It is said that the only man who did not smile was Mr. Horsman, and that even he tried and failed. Sitting on the bench just below Mr. Bright, he put up his face and tried to put him out by interruptions. But it is impossible to disconcert Mr. Bright; and in a minute or two Mr. Horsman's face wore a look of agony, as of a man sitting in a dentist's chair.'

street, from Charing Cross to the venerable Abbey, were filled with men seeking a Reform Bill, as it was two years ago with men come to do honour to an illustrious Italian (Garibaldi), these slanderers of their countrymen would learn to be civil, if they did not learn to love freedom. At a meeting held at Manchester, Mr. Bright urged an immediate organization for meetings and petitions—'as men living in a free country, with representative institutions, determined to partake in some measure of that representation, and to be free.'

The debate on the second reading in the House of Commons began on the 12th of April, and extended over eight nights. Mr. Gladstone, in moving the second reading, defended the working classes against Mr. Lowe's charges, and concluded with an impassioned appeal to the House not to delay a settlement of the question. Earl Grosvenor moved his amendment, which was seconded by Lord Stanley. The speeches which followed on both sides were worthy of the House of Commons in its palmiest days. Sir E. Bulwer Lytton spoke with much brilliancy against the bill, and was followed by Mr. J. S. Mill in its favour. Sir Hugh Cairns and Lord Elcho opposed the bill, the former with great effect from the Conservative point of view. Mr. Horsman delivered another diatribe against the measure; and, alluding to Mr. Gladstone's striking phrase that the Government had broken their bridges and burnt their boats, described them as beaten and desperate men.

Mr. Bright followed, speaking on the night of the 23rd. He began by apologizing for having quoted two or three words as from Mr. Lowe which were not used by that right hon. gentleman, although by so doing he had done him no substantial injustice. He then showed that Lord Stanley was in error in retorting upon him (Mr. Bright) a charge of conspiracy in connection with the debates on the China war and the Conspiracy Bill. From this he passed on to point out how perilous a thing it was that the heirs of two of the most powerful houses in the country (Lords Grosvenor and Stanley) should lead the opposition to this moderate measure. To the former he ventured to give this advice: 'The course that he is taking is a course which tends to separate important persons of the Whig party from the Liberal and popular party in this House and in the country; and if he should succeed in dissevering the most intelligent of the Whig nobility from the great popular party in the country—if he should transfer them to the other side, and put all the dukes and the nobles on one side of Parliament, and the popular party on the other—if the noble lord knows any-

thing whatever of history, he will know this, that when the great popular party of a country are fighting by themselves against the nobles of a country, whatever their virtues and whatever their power—speaking of many of them—you may rely upon it that the popular party will win, and the nobles will go down.'

Mr. Bright maintained that the speeches of Lord Grosvenor and Lord Stanley rested on an opposition to the extension of the suffrage; and of Lord Stanley's speech he observed that it showed an extraordinary distrust of the Government, of the House of Commons, and of the people; and that everything that was true in it was unimportant, and everything that was important was not true. Referring to the share attributed to himself in the separation of the two branches of the question, the hon. member stated that some seven years ago, in conversing with Lord Russell, he had remarked that the best mode of dealing with the subject was to bring in a Franchise Bill, and a few months back he had repeated the advice at a meeting at Rochdale. His reason for this was that the gist of all the pledges made on this subject was not to redistribute seats, but that at an early day the working classes should be admitted in some fair numbers to the franchise. The question of redistribution did not affect any special class; the settlement of it was not necessary to do justice to any particular class; consequently, it was not so urgent as the extension of the franchise. Another reason was that this course lessened the chance of combining all classes of opposition to the bill; and the best justification was that, with one exception, no members for the small boroughs which were likely to be in Schedule A were spoken of as being expected to desert their party on this occasion. The very reason why the House was now called on to deal with Reform, was the sense entertained in the country that the number of electors was too small for a fair representation of the people; and as another proof of the predominant importance of the extension of the franchise, he instanced Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill, which, though it admitted 500,000 new electors to the franchise, only redistributed fifteen seats; and he quoted from the speeches of Mr. Walpole and Mr. Henley, condemning that bill, as a warning to the Opposition that Mr. Disraeli and Lord Stanley were not safe guides in this matter.

Mr. Bright then proceeded to examine the present bill. He controverted the accuracy of the Government statistics as to the number of working men now possessing the franchise, and in support of his contention instanced the cases of Newark

Wakefield, and Stoke-upon-Trent: 'The Chancellor of the Exchequer says when this bill is passed there will be 330,000 working men upon the register. I say there will be 179,000. Call them, for easier recollection, 180,000. The newly-admitted by this bill will be 116,000. What will be the gross effect? The whole number of borough electors in England and Wales, if this bill should pass, upon the calculation of the Blue Book, will be 691,000, of whom 180,000 only, or about one-fourth, will be working men; and therefore that portion of the people which forms at least three-fourths of the whole population will only have one-fourth of the electoral power in the boroughs, and no power whatever worth reckoning in the constituencies of the counties. I think so much political trepidation—I will say so much political cowardice, if I may be allowed the use of that word—never was exhibited before as in the terror shown by the mover and seconder of this amendment, because 116,000 new voters amongst working men will be admitted, while more than 4,000,000 will be left out.'

Turning upon Sir E. Bulwer Lytton for his alarmist speech, Mr. Bright said:

'The right hon. baronet once held very different opinions from these. Many years ago he published a book called "England and the English." This is not a very profound, but it is a very amusing book, and I should like to read to the House a sentence which the right hon. gentleman put as a motto to the book, which motto, I think, he took from Ben Jonson. The words are—

"I am he
"Have measured all the shires of England over,
For to these savages I was addicted
To search their nature and make odd discoveries."

The discovery which he had made up to 1860 was this: if you introduce artisans and working men between a £10 and £6 rental, you give the lion's share of the power of representation to the poverty and passion of the country. In his speech last week he did not treat the working men as if they were made up of poverty and passion, but he used generous words of them, and he told us how there was a tie not only of interest, but of respect and affection, between the rich and the labouring poor; and doubtless this language far more accurately stated his real opinion than when he said that between £6 and £10 the working men were represented by "poverty and passion." But to give them compliments of this kind, and not votes, seems to me to be a thing which will not be well received by the great body of the people, who are asking that at least some of them may be admitted to a representation in this House. It reminds me very much of a couplet which I am sure the right hon. gentleman will remember—

"He kicked them downstairs with such a sweet grace,
They may think he was handing them up." (*Laughter.*)

How is it to be conceived that after a speech full of such noble and generous sympathy, the right hon. gentleman concludes to throw all the weight of his

character and influence into the side of a party which says little that is kind and generous of this class? [Loud Opposition cries of "No, no."] I will say, then, of a party which sometimes does say something generous of the working class, but never shows the slightest disposition to confer upon it any portion of political rights.' (*Applause.*)

The hon. member next described the operations of the Rochdale Co-operative Societies, mentioning that not above half a dozen men connected with the management of those extensive institutions possessed the franchise; and in dwelling upon the present position of the question he referred to the public meetings, and the petitions in favour of the bill, arguing that if the middle classes had been of opinion that it would produce all the evils predicated of it, they would have met and petitioned against it. Mr. Bright then enlarged with great force upon the importance of passing a moderate measure in a time of tranquillity; and he denied, in contradiction to Sir Hugh Cairns, that the House of Commons had ever been based upon the representation of classes. He compared the position of the working classes with that of the negroes under recent legislation in the United States, and asked the House whether it was prepared for ever to keep the bolt in the door which excluded the people from constitutional rights. The bill might be rejected, but the Opposition could not deal satisfactorily with the question, and not to deal with it would be to increase their difficulties. There never was a question connected with the Liberal party which it was more in the interest of the Opposition to settle; and in opposing this moderate scheme they were either misled by their leaders, or else had driven their leaders into a pernicious course.

Alluding to his own political conduct generally, Mr. Bright closed with this appeal, one of the longest and most elaborate of his Parliamentary speeches:

'I have been misrepresented, and condemned, and denounced by hon. gentlemen opposite, and by not a few writers in their press. My conscience tells me that I have laboured honestly only to destroy that which is evil, and to build up that which is good. The political gains of the last twenty-five years, as they were summed up the other night by the hon. member for Wick (Mr. Laing), are my political gains, if they can be called the gains in any degree of any living Englishman.

'And if now, in all the great centres of our population—in Birmingham with its busy district—in Manchester with its encircling towns—in the population of the West Riding of Yorkshire—in Glasgow and amidst the vast industries of the west of Scotland—and in this great Babylon in which we are assembled—if we do not find ourselves surrounded by hungry and exasperated multitudes—if now, more than at any time during the last hundred years, it may be said, quoting the beautiful words of Mr. Sheridan, that—

"Content sits basking on the cheek of toil"—

if this House, and if its statesmen, glory in the change, have I not as much as any living man some claim to partake of that glory? I know, and every thoughtful man among you knows, and those gentlemen who sit on that bench and who are leading you to this enterprise, know that the policy I have urged upon the House and upon the country, so far as it has hitherto been accepted by Parliament, is a policy conservative of the public welfare, strengthening the just authority of Parliament, and adding from day to day fresh lustre and dignity to the Crown. And now, when I speak to you and ask you to pass this bill—when I plead on behalf of those who are not allowed to speak themselves in this House—if you could raise yourselves for this night, for this hour, above the region of party strife—if you could free yourselves from the pestilent atmosphere of passion and prejudice which so often surrounds us here, I feel confident that at this moment I should not plead in vain before this Imperial Parliament on behalf of the English constitution and the English people.'

This stirring peroration, beginning with a justifiable boast, was warmly received by the House. Another philippic came from Mr. Lowe, and the bill was also attacked with great energy by Lord Cranborne and Mr. Disraeli. Mr. Gladstone replied with a speech which ranks amongst his highest efforts. 'You may drive us from our seats,' he said; 'you may bury the bill that we have introduced; but for its epitaph we will write upon its gravestone this line, with certain confidence in its fulfilment—

"Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor."

You cannot fight against the future. Time is on our side. The great social forces which moved on in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of our debates does not for a moment impede or disturb—those great social forces are against you; they are marshalled on our side; and the banner which we now carry, though, perhaps, at some moment it may droop over our sinking heads, yet it soon again will float in the eye of heaven, and it will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy, but to a certain and to a not far-distant victory.'

The division was taken at three o'clock in the morning, amid circumstances of the greatest excitement. The numbers read out by Mr. Brand were: For the second reading, 318; against, 313; majority for Government, 5. The announcement was received with loud cheers by the Ministerialists, followed by equally strong counter-cheering on the part of the Opposition. Just before the numbers were announced, strangers in the galleries rose in their seats—Conservative members sat upon the edges of benches—the crowd at the bar pushed its way half up the floor—the royal princes leaned forward in their inconvenient standing-place—and the officers of the House, partici-

pating in the universal excitement, had no eyes or ears for any breach of rule or order.

Government decided to go on with the Bill, and many subsequent divisions resulted in their favour; but on the 18th of June they were defeated on a crucial point. Lord Dunkellin having proposed an amendment in favour of a borough franchise based on rating instead of rental, the proposition was carried against the Ministry by 315 votes to 304. A scene of frantic enthusiasm was witnessed on the Opposition benches when Lord Dunkellin took from the clerk the paper containing the numbers. The reading of the figures was further followed by the waving of hats, the clapping of hands, and other signs of delight on the part of the opponents of the Government.

On the following day Lord Russell's Ministry resigned, and a Derby-Disraeli Administration was formed. The cause of Reform was put back, but, as Mr. Gladstone had eloquently predicted, its triumph was only delayed. The country once more became strongly moved on the question. On the 29th of June a Reform demonstration was held in Trafalgar Square, attended by about ten thousand people. It was proposed to hold also a great meeting in Hyde Park, but this was prohibited by the Government. Writing to the Council of the League respecting this prohibition, Mr. Bright said, 'You have asserted your right to meet on Primrose Hill and in Trafalgar Square. I hope after Monday night no one will doubt your right to meet in Hyde Park. If a public meeting in a public park is denied you, and if millions of intelligent and honest men are denied the franchise, on what foundation do our liberties rest, or is there in the country any liberty but the toleration of the ruling class? This is a serious question, but it is necessary to ask it, and some answer must be given to it.' On July 23, a riot occurred in Hyde Park, arising out of the official notice prohibiting the demonstration. Mr. Edmond Beales, and other prominent members of the Reform League, requested admission to the Park, which was denied them. They then returned to Trafalgar Square, where resolutions were passed urging the prosecution of lawful and constitutional means for the extension of the franchise, and thanking Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and others for being faithful to the cause which others had basely deserted. While this was taking place, a mob broke into Hyde Park, and a serious encounter occurred between the populace and the police, quiet being ultimately restored by detachments of the Foot Guards and the Life Guards. The day's proceed-

ings subsequently gave rise to much discussion, the conduct of the Home Secretary (Mr. Walpole) being severely canvassed. On the 8th of August a Reform meeting was held in the Guildhall, presided over by the Lord Mayor, when resolutions were carried in favour of manhood suffrage and the ballot.

During the recess, the Reform campaign was caried on with vigour. Perhaps the most remarkable of the many demonstrations which took place was that held at Brookfields, Birmingham, on the 27th of August, the numbers present being variously estimated at from 150,000 to 250,000. The *Birmingham Post* observed: 'Old Unionists tell us that the meeting in the Brookfields not only recalled and rivalled the best days of the famous Political Union, but excelled the greatest assemblages ever held under the auspices of the Union, and the presidency of Thomas Attwood. The enthusiasm, they say, was fully as decided, the character of the assemblage was as high, if not higher; while the numbers far exceeded any that the Political Union was able to bring together at one time. Such testimony may be accepted as conclusive; and Birmingham may plume itself upon having, twice in one century, led the van in a national agitation for Parliamentary Reform.' Six separate meetings were held, presided over by Mr. Baldwin, the Rev. A. O'Neil, Mr. Taunton, the Rev. T. H. Morgan, Mr. Alderman Sturge, and Mr. Thomas Wright. The speakers included Mr. Mason Jones, Mr. J. S. Wright, Mr. Edmond Beales, Mr. Rogers, Mr. George Potter, Col. Dickson, Mr. George Howell, and Mr. J. A. Partridge, in addition to the various chairmen named. Reform resolutions were passed with acclamation, and great enthusiasm was manifested for Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright at all the meetings.

In the evening a *soirée* was held in the Town Hall, attended by several thousand persons. The Mayor, Mr. E. Yates, presided at the subsequent public meeting, and there were present, amongst others, Mr. Scholefield, M.P., Mr. Bright, M.P., Mr. Cave, M.P., Col. Dickson, Mr. E. Beales, Mr. Mason Jones, Mr. Ernest Jones, Mr. E. O. Greening, the Ven. Archdeacon Sandford, the Revs. G. G. Johnson, T. H. Morgan, J. Lord, F. W. Beynon, and H. E. Dowson; Aldermen Ryland, Sadler, Holland, Palmer, and Osborne; seventeen members of the Town Council; and Messrs. W. Middlemore, C. Sturge, J. Jaffray, G. Dixon, H. Manton, J. H. Chamberlain, J. S. Manton, J. A. Partridge, W. Morgan, J. S. Wright, J. T. Bunce, and Mr. G. Edmonds—the last-named gentleman, as one of the few living

relicts of the great agitation of 1830–32, being vociferously cheered. Addresses were presented to the borough members.

Mr. Bright was the chief speaker at the meeting. He referred to the vast assemblies which had already been witnessed in London and Birmingham on the Reform question—assemblies such as had not been seen for a generation past. He next went through the erroneous estimate of the late Government as to the numbers of working men proposed to be admitted under their bill, and showed that in the boroughs of England and Wales only 200,000 would have been admitted. He quoted Mr. Lowe's denunciation of the working classes, and condemned his policy, urging his hearers to press on in their agitation for restoring the British constitution with all its freedom to the British people. 'Working men in this hall,' he continued, 'I wish my voice had been loud enough to have said what I am about to say to the vast multitude which we looked on this day; but I say it to them through the press, and to all the working men of this kingdom,—I say that the accession to office of Lord Derby is a declaration of war against the working classes. The course taken in London the other day by the police, and it had almost been by the military, is an illustration of the doctrines and the principles of the Derby Administration. They reckon nothing of the constitution of their country.'

The hon. gentleman further observed, 'You are to be told that you are so ignorant and so venal, so drunken, so impulsive, so unreflecting, and so disorderly, that it is not even safe to skim off, as it were, the very cream of you to the number of 116,000, or it may be of 204,000, and to admit these to a vote for members of the House of Commons. This is the Tory theory. This is the faith of Lord Derby and his party.' Then came this amusing description of Lord Derby's Ministry, which was received with roars of laughter: 'The Government of Lord Derby in the House of Commons sitting all in a row reminds me very much of a number of amusing and ingenious gentlemen whom I dare say some of you have seen and listened to. I mean the Christy Minstrels. The Christy Minstrels, if I am not misinformed, are, when they are clean-washed, white men; but they come before the audience as black as the blackest negroes, and by this transformation it is expected that their jokes and songs will be more amusing. The Derby minstrels pretend to be Liberal and white; but the fact is, if you come nearer and examine them closely, you will find them to be just as black and curly as the Tories have ever been. I do not know, and I will not pretend to say which of them it is that plays the banjo

and which the bones. But I have no doubt that, in their manœuvres to keep in office during the coming session, we shall know something more about them than we do at present; they are, in point of fact, when they pretend to be Liberal, mere usurpers and impostors.'

Mr. Bright said that he was not afraid of the principles of the Reform League. He had no fear of manhood suffrage, and no man was more a friend of the ballot than he was. After exhorting his hearers to constant effort in their great work, he thus concluded his speech, the applause when he sat down being again and again renewed: 'The address which has been presented to me has referred to 1832. I remember that time well. My young heart then was stirred with the trumpet-blast that sounded from your midst. There was no part of this kingdom where your voice was not heard. Let it sound again. Stretch out your hands to your countrymen in every part of the three kingdoms, and ask them to join you in a great and righteous effort on behalf of that freedom which has been so long the boast of Englishmen, but which the majority of Englishmen have never yet possessed. I shall esteem it an honour which my words cannot describe, and which even in thought I cannot measure, if the population which I am permitted to represent should do its full duty in the great struggle which is before us. Remember the great object for which we strive. Care not for calumnies and lies. Our object is this—to restore the British constitution in all its fulness, with all its freedom, to the British people.'

Manchester followed Birmingham, and on the 24th of September a demonstration was held in Campfield, at which were present a vast number of persons, estimated at from eighty to a hundred thousand. In the evening a great meeting was held in the Free Trade Hall. The *Manchester Examiner* of the following day stated that long before the appointed time for the commencement of the proceedings, every part of the building was so crowded that it was impossible to find standing-room. It was therefore determined that the business should be at once proceeded with. The appearance of Mr. T. B. Potter, Mr. (now Sir) Wilfrid Lawson, Mr. Edmond Beales, Mr. Ernest Jones, and other well-known Reformers, was the signal for loud and prolonged cheering. After an interval of eager waiting, Mr. John Bright, M. P., appeared upon the platform, and thereupon ensued such a scene as had not been witnessed in Manchester for many years. The entire mass of the audience saluted Mr. Bright with cheers, and waving of hats and hand-

kerchiefs; and the band played the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne.' Instantly the appropriateness of this chorus to the renewal of intercourse between Mr. Bright and his former constituents was perceived, and the entire audience joined as one man in singing the chorus, taking it up and repeating it again and again, and concluding by saluting Mr. Bright with a hearty cheer. Mr. T. B. Potter, M. P., took the chair; and amongst those present, besides the gentlemen named above, were Mr. B. Whitworth, M. P., Mr. Fildes, M. P., Mr. George Wilson, Mr. Jacob Bright, Sir James Watts, Mr. Wright Turner, the Rev. Thomas Binney, Prof. Rogers, Mr. B. Armitage, the Rev. Dr. Parker, Ald. Carter of Leeds, Ald. Ashworth of Rochdale, Prof. Greenbank, Rev. S. A. Steinthal, Mr. Samuel Watts, the Hon. Lyulph Stanley, etc. An address was presented to Mr. Bright, and in his reply the hon. gentleman again advocated a large extension of the franchise, with the protection of the ballot. He sharply attacked Lord Derby and his friends, charging them with having set class against class. They had done much also to separate the Parliament from the nation; they had made the House of Commons the reviler instead of the protector of the people; and they had frustrated the just and beneficent intentions of the Crown. These men could not govern Britain; the working classes and the middle classes would alike condemn them. They could not govern Ireland, for in that unhappy country their policy had begotten a condition of chronic insurrection which they could not cure. They would be excluded from power, and their policy rejected by the people, for it was on broad and just and liberal principles alone that England could maintain her honourable but now unchallenged place amongst the great nations of the world.

At a banquet held on the following day at the Albion Hotel, Mr. Bright said that those great meetings were not so much meetings for discussion as meetings for demonstration. Alluding to the abstract right to use force in the last resort, he observed that it was no more immoral thus to use force for the obtaining and securing of freedom, than it was for the Government to use force to suppress and deny that freedom. But he hoped the time would never come when it would be necessary to consider questions of that nature; he thought this question was settled in 1832. And since then liberty had grown. 'The point at which we have now arrived of political liberty and instruction and of civilization permits us to believe that there is nothing we can fairly claim, nothing that could do us good, that cannot be obtained by that grand and peaceful movement

of which the meetings of the last few days have formed so eminent and useful a part.'

We next find Mr. Bright in the West Riding of Yorkshire. On the 8th of October he attended a meeting in the Leeds Town Hall, where he was received with great enthusiasm, the meeting rising *en masse* to welcome him. In accepting the address presented to him, he observed that some writers complained that at Manchester he had said very much the same thing that he had said at Birmingham. He believed that a charge of that nature was brought more than two thousand years ago against one of the wisest of the ancients. They said that he was always saying the same thing about the same thing; and he asked them in return whether they expected him to say a different thing about the same thing. Well, when the critics had answered what he had already said about reform, he would endeavour to tell them something new. The case was a very simple one—the House of Commons had no pretence whatever for its existence except that it spoke for the nation, of which it was a part. If it spoke for only one out of six or seven of the people, it was no fair representation of the nation. Mr. Bright illustrated the inequalities in representation by citing several cases of small boroughs. The member for Stamford (Lord Cranborne), who sat for Stamford by favour of the Marquis of Exeter, had assailed Mr. Gladstone with great animosity because he had said that the great body of the unenfranchised men of England were worthy of consideration, for they were our own flesh and blood. They were resolved to alter the existing condition of things—to restore in fact the representation, and to restore the fair and free action of the English constitution. There was a spirit created in London, in Birmingham, in South Lancashire, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in the Newcastle and Durham districts, in Glasgow and the west of Scotland—there was a power rising which, fairly combined, could do all this. He said to the working classes, rely mainly on yourselves, for you are the great nation excluded. Mr. Bright closed with this happy reference to the Atlantic cable, which had been successfully laid: 'It was towards the end of the fifteenth century that the grand old Genoese discovered the new world. A friend of mine, Cyrus W. Field, of New York, is the Columbus of our time, for after no less than forty passages across the Atlantic in pursuit of the great aim of his life, he has at length, by his cable, moored the new world close alongside the old. To speak from the United Kingdom to the North American Continent, and from North America to

the United Kingdom, is now but the work of a moment of time, and it does not require the utterance even of a whisper. The English nations are brought together, and they must march on together. The spirit of either Government must be the same, although the form may be different. A broad and generous freedom is the heritage of England, and our purpose is this, to establish that freedom for ever on the sure foundation of a broad and generous representation of the people.'

Going north from Leeds, on the 15th Mr. Bright arrived at Glasgow, there to continue the campaign. An imposing demonstration took place on the 16th, a procession of many thousands of the friends of Reform parading the streets, and ultimately, forming into a great meeting on Glasgow Green. The numbers present at the demonstration were enormous. In the evening, an overflowing and enthusiastic meeting was held in the City Hall, and an address was presented to Mr. Bright. In his reply, he put the question then agitating the country to be —whether in future the government and the legislation of the country should be conducted by a privileged class in a sham Parliament, or on the principles of the constitution of the nation, through its representatives, fairly and freely chosen. He had no fear of manhood suffrage, and no man was more a friend of the ballot than he was. Mr. Bright recommended that the passages from Mr. Lowe's celebrated and unhappy speech attacking the working classes should be printed upon cards, and hung up in every factory, workshop, and club-house, and in every place where working men were accustomed to assemble. They must rouse the spirit of the people against these slanderers of a great and noble nation. The speaker pointed out that there were 254 boroughs in the United Kingdom, and only 54 of these possessed a constituency of 2,000 electors and upwards. Out of every hundred grown men in the United Kingdom, eighty-four had no votes. For all purposes of constitutional government those eighty-four might as well live in Russia. One-third of the House of Commons, or 220 members, were actually elected by 70,000 votes—that is to say, that 220 members of the House of Commons were chosen by a number of men scattered over the country, who were fewer by almost one-half than the number of grown men in the city of Glasgow alone. And further, one-half of the House of Commons was chosen by about 180,000 electors, being only one-seventh of the whole number of electors, and much below the number of men who were to be found in the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Having referred to the corruption which prevailed under the

existing electoral system, Mr. Bright came to the following passage in his speech, which subsequently caused much commotion amongst the anti-Reformers in the House and in the press :—

'Now, if the Clerk of the House of Commons were placed at Temple Bar, and if he had orders to tap upon the shoulder every well-dressed and apparently clean-washed man who passed through that ancient bar, until he had numbered six hundred and fifty-eight; and if the Crown summoned these six hundred and fifty-eight to be the Parliament of the United Kingdom, my honest conviction is that you would have a better Parliament than now exists. This assertion will stagger some timid and some good men; but let me explain myself to you. It would be a Parliament, every member of which would have no direct constituency, but it would be a Parliament that would act as a jury that would take some heed of the facts and arguments laid before it. It would be free, at any rate, from the class prejudices which weigh upon the present House of Commons. It would be free from the overshadowing presence of what are called noble families. It would owe no allegiance to great landowners, and I hope it would have fewer men amongst it seeking their own gains by entering Parliament.'

Mr. Bright proceeded to substantiate his views on this matter by the course which had been adopted by the Protectionists—who refused to be convinced until the occurrence of the terrible famine in Ireland—and other facts. He next referred to the Land Laws, observing that half the land of England was in the possession of fewer than one hundred and fifty men, and half the land of Scotland in the possession of not more than ten or twelve men. The result was the gradual extirpation of the middle class, and the constant degradation of the tillers of the soil. He hoped that Scotchmen would lead the way in the deliverance of the farmers from their present slavery. Mr. Bright then touched upon the ignorance amongst the agricultural population of England, and pointed out that in the United Kingdom there were more than 1,200,000 paupers. There was so great a mass of misery that benevolence could not reach it. It was not benevolence, but justice, that could deal with giant evils. The hon. gentleman next condemned the proposed increase in the naval expenditure, and remarked upon the inequality of the taxation of the country. He admitted that good things had been done by Parliament, but they had sprung from the people, and the people had really carried them. He was in favour of a system of legislation by all for all, as they would then have an average. If they could add another million to the existing voters, they would modify the constituencies, and they would be less open to management. Further, Parliament would not then revile and slander the people; nor would it cheer with frantic violence when their countrymen were

described in hideous and hateful colours. What might be called the Botany Bay view of their countrymen would be got rid of, and a sense of greater justice and generosity towards the bulk of the nation would take its place. Having asked whether there were any ministers of religion amongst his audience, Mr. Bright closed his stirring address with this appeal:—

'An eminent man of your country, the late Dr. Chalmers, in speaking of the question of Free Trade, and particularly of the struggle for the abolition of the Corn Laws, uttered some memorable words. He said he thought there was nothing that would tend so much to sweeten the breath of British society as the abolition of the Corn Laws. I believe now that there is nothing which would tend so much to sweeten the breath of British society as the admission of a large and generous number of the working classes to citizenship and the exercise of the franchise. Now, if my words should reach the ears and reach the heart of any man who is interested in the advancement of religion in this country, I ask him to consider whether there are not great political obstacles to the extension of civilization and morality and religion within the bounds of the United Kingdom. We believe—these ministers, you, and I—we believe in a Supreme Ruler of the Universe. We believe in His omnipotence; we believe and we humbly trust in His mercy. We know that the strongest argument which is used against that belief, by those who reject it, is an argument drawn from the misery, and the helplessness, and the darkness of so many of our race, even in countries which call themselves civilized and Christian. Is not that the fact? If I believed that this misery, and this helplessness, and this darkness could not be touched or transformed, I myself should be driven to admit the almost overwhelming force of that argument; but I am convinced that just laws, and an enlightened administration of them, would change the face of the country. I believe that ignorance and suffering might be lessened to an incalculable extent, and that many an Eden, beauteous in flowers and rich in fruits, might be raised up in the waste wilderness which spreads before us. But no class can do that. The class which has hitherto ruled in this country has failed miserably. It revels in power and wealth, whilst at its feet, a terrible peril for its future, lies the multitude which it has neglected. If a class has failed, let us try the nation. That is our faith, that is our purpose, that is our cry—let us try the nation. This it is which has called together these countless numbers of the people to demand a change; and as I think of it, and of these gatherings, sublime in their vastness and in their resolution, I think I see, as it were, above the hill-tops of time, the glimmerings of the dawn of a better and a nobler day for the country and for the people that I love so well.'

Speaking on the following morning at a public breakfast given to him at the Cobden Hotel, Glasgow, Mr. Bright reiterated his strong desire that Scotland should make itself felt in the great movement. He also referred to the mighty awakening in England; and with regard to his own prominent position in the agitation, said that it had been altogether unsought by him. He had no anxiety to be a leader in politics, or to be lionized in great cities; but from his youth upwards he had had a horror and a hatred of that which was unjust to the people. 'It was that feeling,' he observed, 'which led me to join one of whom I cannot speak without a faltering voice (Mr. Cobden) in that

great labour in which we worked so long together, the abolition of the monopoly in food; and now if I am engaged more prominently than some men may think I ought to be in this question, it is because I would wish to join my countrymen in striking down monopoly of a wider influence, and which when it is gone, ten or twenty years afterwards, all thoughtful and good men in the country will rejoice at as much as they now rejoice that the monopoly, the stupid and ignorant monopoly, of the landowners no longer limits the supply of food to a great people.'

We must reserve the remainder of Mr. Bright's speeches during this vigorous Reform campaign, together with our account of the Derby-Disraeli Reform Bill, for another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REFORM BILL CARRIED.

Mr. Bright's Reform Speeches.—An arduous Campaign.—He visits Ireland.—Speeches at Dublin.—Reform Banquet in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester.—Mr. Bright on the Inequalities of the Suffrage.—Lord Derby and his Party and the Reform Question.—Trades' Demonstration at Kensington.—Meeting in St. James's Hall.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—Forcible Pleas for Reform.—The Question pressing for settlement.—Mr. Bright's Defence of the Queen.—He is himself misrepresented and slandered.—Reply to Mr. Garth, M.P.—Workmen's Address of Sympathy with Mr. Bright.—Reform in 1867.—League Demonstration in London.—Mr. Disraeli introduces the Government Scheme in the House of Commons.—The Resolutions being opposed, are withdrawn.—New Measure resolved upon by the Cabinet.—Resignation of three of the Ministers.—Mr. Disraeli introduces the New Reform Bill.—It is severely criticised by Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright.—Demonstrations during the Easter Recess.—Mr. Bright on Mr. Gladstone's Leadership—.Reform League Meeting in Hyde Park.—Mr. Bright on Voting Papers.—The Bill in the House of Lords.—Important Amendments.—Lord Cairns's Minority Clause.—It is warmly opposed by Mr. Bright.—The Reform Bill passes.—Its general Character.

THE work upon which Mr. Bright entered in the autumn of 1866, and which was completed in the following year, in connection with the Reform question, was amongst the most arduous he has undertaken during the whole course of his political life. Putting out of sight the physical wear and tear, and the strain upon the nervous system, which so much travelling and the attendance of so many meetings involved, the speeches he delivered formed in themselves an extraordinary intellectual effort. To discover new phases of a subject which had been so freely and exhaustively discussed as that of Reform, and to put these phases in fresh and telling language, was a task which would have discouraged and embarrassed most men; but on examining these speeches now, after the lapse of fifteen years, we are struck by the variety of their arguments, the strength of their appeals, and the power of their eloquence. There has been no task accomplished by a living statesman which can be compared with that which Mr. Bright then achieved, save the wonderful and memorable campaign of Mr. Gladstone in Midlothian in 1879–80.

At the close of October, and within a fortnight of the delivery of his Glasgow address, Mr. Bright crossed over to Ireland. On

the 30th he was entertained at a banquet in the Rotunda, Dublin, and on rising to respond to the toast of his health there was the same exhibition of enthusiastic feeling which had greeted him upon every English platform. His address on that occasion we shall deal with in a chapter devoted to purely Irish questions. It will suffice here to state that he advocated a wider suffrage for the Irish people as one very potent means of leading to a redress of their grievances. On the 31st the hon. gentleman received a deputation from the Cork Farmers' Club, by whom he was presented with an address thanking him for his services to Ireland, and for his efforts to improve the condition of the occupiers of the land. In reply, the hon. gentleman said that the whole tone of society in England had been wonderfully improved by the change which took place in 1846; and he believed that if in England and in Ireland the laws of political economy were applied to land, they would find just as great a change from this point forward with regard to matters which were influenced by laws affecting land, as they had found in past times by the abolition of the laws which prevented the importation of corn. A change of Government might do something towards bringing about a settlement of the land question, but he believed what they had most to rely on was a change in the representation of the people.

Mr. Bright also attended a meeting of the working men of Dublin, held in the theatre of the Mechanics' Institution, on the 2nd of November. Mr. James Haughton occupied the chair, and an address of welcome was presented to the member for Birmingham, expressing the thanks of the working men of Ireland to him, and stating that the Irish people had no hope of relief from an English House of Commons as at present constituted. Mr. Bright, in his reply, showed the great importance of Parliamentary Reform to Irishmen. The existing representation was very unequal, for there were twenty-seven boroughs in Ireland with only 9,453 electors, while the county of Cork had 16,107 electors, and returned but two members. But that was not the worst, for many of these boroughs were too small for independence. The question of the ballot was of the greatest importance in Great Britain and Ireland, both in the counties and boroughs. Mr. Bright also dwelt upon the Church and the land questions, but his observations in connection with these subjects we reserve for the present.

In less than a month after leaving Ireland—that is, on the 20th of November, Mr. Bright attended a great Reform banquet in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. It was organized by the

National Reform Union, and several Liberal members of Parliament attended. This meeting was amongst the most striking and important held upon the question, and when Mr. Bright rose to address the gathering, he was received by the audience standing, their cheering continuing for several minutes.

Mr. Bright began by saying that the old taunt that the working men felt no grievance in the matter of Reform had been fully and satisfactorily answered. But now the critics turned round, and said that the middle class stood entirely aloof from the movement. He instanced what had occurred in Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow to the contrary; and added, 'But if there was any question on this matter, I would ask those gentlemen to come on this platform to-night. Here is the largest and finest hall in Britain, the largest and finest hall in Europe, I believe the largest and finest hall in the world, and yet this hall is crowded with persons to whom our opponents, I think generally, unless they were very fastidious, would admit the term respectable and influential. I doubt if there has ever been held in this kingdom, within our time, a political banquet more numerous, more influential, more unanimous, more grand in every respect than that which is held here to-night. Just now it was the fashion to flatter and to court the middle class, in order to set it against the working class. And there was no greater fallacy than to say that the middle classes were in possession of power. The middle class have votes, but those votes are rendered harmless and nugatory by the unfair distribution of them, and there is placed in the voter's hand a weapon which has neither temper nor edge, by which he can neither fight for further freedom, nor defend that which his ancestors have gained.'

The speaker proceeded to show the unequal distribution of the suffrage, pointing out that of the 254 boroughs in the United Kingdom there were 145 with a population of under 20,000 each, and 109 with a population over that number. But the boroughs under 20,000 returned 215 members, against 181 returned by the boroughs over 20,000. Those boroughs with over 20,000 inhabitants, having 39 members fewer than the boroughs under 20,000, were in this position—their members represented six times as many electors, seven times as much population, and fourteen times as much payment of income-tax as the larger number of members represented. Even in the boroughs, therefore, the representative system was almost wholly delusive, and defrauded the middle classes of the power which the Act of 1832 professed to give them. As to the

county representation, it was almost too sad a subject to dwell upon. But he was delighted to believe that the great body of the people were resolved that this state of things should no longer exist. An honest Government had made an honest attempt in the last session of Parliament to tinker the existing system, but the Tory party refused even to have it tinkered. His opinion was that the papers which professed to say what Lord Derby and his friends were going to do in the way of reform knew nothing about it, and that the Government were waiting to see what the weather would be.

Having alluded to the forthcoming London trades' demonstration, Mr. Bright replied to the views of those who thought that Lord Derby would bring in a good Reform Bill. 'They say that Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington carried Catholic Emancipation; that Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington repealed the Corn Law; and why should not Lord Derby pass a Reform Bill? Lord Derby is neither the Duke of Wellington nor Sir Robert Peel. He deserted both those eminent men in 1846, rather than unite with them to repeal the Corn Law; and he has never shown, from that hour to this, one atom of statesmanship or one spark of patriotism that would lead us to expect that, on this occasion, he would turn round, and, neglecting his party, do something for his country.' The antecedents and speeches of Mr. Disraeli, Lord Stanley, Lord Cranborne, General Peel, and Sir Stafford Northcote were successively glanced at, and then the hon. gentleman added,—

'I want to ask you whether from these men you are to expect, you are to wait for, with anxious and hopeful looking forward, any Reform Bill? And after all these speeches had been made, Lord Derby did his utmost to prevail upon Mr. Lowe to become a member of his Cabinet. If, after all this, they were to attempt to manufacture and introduce a Reform Bill, they would cover themselves and their party with humiliation. I know that in this country politicians change sides; office has a wonderful effect upon men. I suppose there are men here such as were described by our witty friend, Mr. Hosea Biglow, in painting the character of some politicians in America. He said of them, as we perhaps may say of Lord Derby and his party,—

> "A merciful Providence fashioned them hollow,
> On purpose that they might their principles swallow."

But, notwithstanding that provision, that merciful provision, for statesmen, I confess I do not believe that the Government have determined to bring in a Reform Bill, or that they can by any possibility bring in a bill which the Reformers of this country can accept. They have done everything during the past session by fraudulent statements—by insults to the people—by the most evident baseness of party action—to destroy the moderate and honest attempt of Lord Russell to improve the representation. And I do not believe that in

one short year they can turn round; and, capacious as may be the internal cavity of the Tory Government, I think they cannot in one short year swallow all their Conservative principles.'

He maintained that the enemies of the Bill of 1866 could not become the honest friends of Reform in 1867. He advised his listeners to be on the watch. In the next Reform measure they must see the franchise extended to all householders in boroughs. 'I believe that, if it were so extended,' he observed in conclusion, 'we should arrive at a point at which, so long as any of us are permitted to meddle with the politics of our country, no further change would be demanded. I therefore am entirely in favour of it, because I believe it to be wise in itself, and because it is the ancient borough franchise of this kingdom. I am in accord with our ancient constitution. I would stand by it; wherever it afforded support for freedom I would march in its track. That track is so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. I would be guided by its lights. They have been kept burning by great men among our forefathers for many generations. Our only safety in this warfare is in adhering to the ancient and noble constitution of our country. And when we have restored it to its bygone strength, and invited the great body of the people to take part in political power, then the House of Commons will be the servant of the nation, and not its master; and it will do the bidding, not of a small, a limited, often an ignorant, necessarily a selfish class, but the bidding of a great and noble people.'

A great demonstration of the Trades Societies in favour of Parliamentary Reform was held on the 3rd of December, in the grounds of Beaufort House, Kensington, lent for the occasion by Lord Ranelagh. The procession was conducted in the most peaceful and orderly manner. The Societies assembled first in St. James's Park, and from thence marched out in pre-arranged order through the gate leading into Pall Mall by Marlborough House. Amongst the trades which appeared in the largest numbers, and maintained the most imposing appearance, were the stonemasons, bricklayers, brickmakers, joiners, carpenters, cabinet-makers, tailors, and shoemakers; many of the trades carried emblems of their particular pursuits, and several branches of the Reform League carried banners inscribed 'Manhood Suffrage,' and 'The Ballot.' The streets were excellently kept in order by ten thousand voluntary keepers of the peace. Scarcely more than one third of the enormous procession got into the grounds of Beaufort House. Resolutions

which had been drawn up were put from seven platforms to as many groups of people, and were carried unanimously. The speakers included Messrs. Beales, Potter, Dickson, Lucraft, and Holyoake.

On the following evening a great indoor meeting in connection with the Trades Demonstration was held in St. James's Hall, Mr. G. Potter presiding. On the platform were several members of Parliament and delegates from Reform Associations in Great Britain and Ireland. A resolution in favour of Reform was carried unanimously, and then the Chairman called upon Mr. Bright to address the meeting.

On commencing his speech, Mr. Bright said that the counsel he had given to working men eight years before to organize themselves and press for their rights had been adopted to a large extent, and every man in the kingdom now felt that the aspect of the Reform question had been wholly changed. As to the assertion that it was undesirable for trade societies to co-operate for political objects, he pointed out that some years before nearly all the agricultural societies of the country were converted into political societies, for the purpose of sustaining an Act of Parliament which denied an honest and fair supply of food to the people of this country. The great difficulty of the opponents of Reform now was, that they felt the working men were too numerous to be let in with safety, and too numerous to be kept out without danger. If the Tories were dissatisfied with this movement, what would they have? Would they like that you should meet in secret societies, that you should administer to each other illegal oaths, that you should undertake the task of midnight drilling, that you should purchase throughout London and the provinces a supply of arms, that you should in this frightful and terrible manner endeavor to menace the Government, and to wring from them a concession of your rights? But surely one of two modes must be taken. If there be a deep and wide-spread sentiment that injustice is no longer tolerable, then, judging from all past history of all people, one of two modes will be taken, either that mode so sad and so odious of secret conspiracy, or that mode so grand and so noble which you have adopted.'

Their grievance was, Mr. Bright continued, that the representative system of England was deformed from its natural, beautiful, and just proportions. It was not at all disputed that only sixteen out of every hundred men were on the electoral rolls, and able, all other circumstances favouring, to give their vote at a general election; and it was not disputed that

half the House of Commons—that an absolute majority of that House—was elected by a number of electors not exceeding altogether three men out of every hundred in the United Kingdom. He had taken the trouble to make a calculation from Acland's 'Imperial Poll-Book,' and he had found that the whole number of votes given at the contest in every borough and county was short of the number of 900,000, which was about one in eight of the men in the country. Taking away double votes, there would not be registered more than about 800,000 votes at a general election in the United Kingdom where there was a contest in every county and in every borough. But as a matter of fact the whole number of votes registered at the general election of 1859 was under 370,000, and from this number were to be deducted double votes, etc. After this he undertook to say that the Government of the United Kingdom, in the sense indicated in a quotation he had made from William Penn's preface to his Constitution, was not free to the English people. There was not representation enough to make Parliament truly responsible to the intelligence, and the virtue, and the opinions of the nation. But the opponents of Reform had resisted even the moderate measure of last session: they might still continue to resist, until that which was only a great exhibition of opinion might become, necessarily and inevitably, a great and menacing exhibition of force.

The next passage in Mr. Bright's speech—a powerful vindication of his own position on the Reform question—we give in full:—

'These opponents of ours, many of them in Parliament openly, and many of them secretly in the press, have charged us with being the promoters of a dangerous excitement. They say we are the source of the danger which threatens; they have absolutely the effrontery to charge me with being the friend of public disorder. I am one of the people. Surely, if there be one thing in a free country more clear than another, it is that any one of the people may speak openly to the people. If I speak to the people of their rights, and indicate to them the way to secure them—if I speak of their danger to the monopolists of power—am I not a wise counsellor, both to the people and to their rulers?

'Suppose I stood at the foot of Vesuvius or Etna, and, seeing a hamlet or a homestead planted on its slope, I said to the dwellers in that hamlet or in that homestead, You see that vapour which ascends from the summit of the mountain. That vapour may become a dense, black smoke that will obscure the sky. You see that trickling of lava from the crevices or fissures in the side of the mountain. That trickling of lava may become a river of fire. You hear that muttering in the bowels of the mountain. That muttering may become a bellowing thunder, the voice of a violent convulsion that may shake half a continent. You know that at your feet is the grave of great cities for which there is no resurrection, as history tells us that dynasties and aristocracies have passed away, and their name has been known no more for ever. If I say this

to the dwellers upon the slope of the mountain, and if there comes hereafter a catastrophe which makes the world to shudder, am I responsible for that catastrophe? I did not build the mountain, or fill it with explosive materials. I merely warned the men that were in danger.

'So, now, it is not I who am stimulating men to the violent pursuit of their acknowledged constitutional rights. We are merely about our lawful business; and you are the citizens of a country that calls itself free, yet you are citizens to whom is denied the greatest and the first blessing of the constitution under which you live. If the truth must be told, the Tory party is the turbulent party of this nation.'

In 1832 the country was within twenty-four hours of revolution; and in 1846 a famine was necessary before the Corn Laws were abolished. If the Franchise Bill of the past session had been carried, henceforth the people in these islands would no longer have been two nations. All would have felt that henceforth they were one people. Who prevented this? Mr. Bright went on to ask. Lord Derby and the party of which he was the acknowledged and trusted leader. Lord Derby now stood nearest to the Throne, and he ventured to say that he was not a strength but a weakness to that Throne. One would have supposed that the Government had troubles enough on hand in Ireland without urging the people to excitement in England. Mr. Bright then drew a picture of Ireland under the Tory Government, with the Habeas Corpus Act suspended, individual liberty abolished, etc.; and added that in the presence of all this, and that which had occurred the previous year in relation to Reform, it was Lord Derby himself who was the fomenter of discord, and his party the turbulent element in English political society.

Mr. Bright said he would tell that party that this question could not sleep. As a memorial forwarded to the Government of the United States by a convention held in Switzerland said, 'Unfinished questions have no pity for the repose of nations.' That referred to the great question of negro slavery, but it was just as true when applied to Reform. They had been told to stand still and wait for the action of Parliament, but he could not put his confidence in the men who had already betrayed them. The duty of the working men—a duty from which they could not escape—was to go on as they had begun, and to perfect in every part of the country their organization in favour of their enfranchisement. Every one of their societies must give itself for a short time to the working out of their political redemption. Give every man engaged in the work his due, and help by every honest endeavour to bring that great national question to such a solid and final issue that it should no longer disturb

the repose of the nation. 'And, lastly, I beg of you,' said the speaker, 'to rise to something like a just contemplation of what the great issue is for which you are contending. It is to make you citizens of one of the noblest nations on the face of the earth—of a nation which has a grand history in the past, and which I trust, partly through your help, will have a still grander history in the future. Let me beg of you that, in all you do, you may be animated by a great and noble spirit, for you have set your hands and hearts to a great and noble work.'

Several resolutions were proposed, and unanimously adopted by the meeting. In the course of the proceedings, Mr. Ayrton, M.P., remarked upon the Queen's infrequent appearance on public occasions, and censured her for not recognizing the people when they gathered in such numbers in front of one of her palaces. Before the vote of thanks to the chairman was put to the meeting, Mr. Bright interposed for a moment, and repudiated the insinuation contained in the speech of the member for the Tower Hamlets. 'I am not accustomed,' he said, 'to stand up in defence of those who are possessors of crowns. But I could not sit and hear that observation without a sensation of wonder and of pain. I think there has been, by many persons, a great injustice done to the Queen in reference to her desolate and widowed position. And I venture to say this, that a woman—be she the Queen of a great realm, or the wife of one of your labouring men—who can keep alive in her heart a great sorrow for the lost object of her life and affection, is not at all likely to be wanting in a great and generous sympathy with you.'

These sentiments elicited loud and prolonged cheers from the audience, and the body of the people in the hall rose, and sang a verse of 'God save the Queen.' Mr. Ayrton sought to make an explanation, to the effect that the tenor of his observations had been misunderstood; but he could not obtain a hearing. The meeting then closed with the vote to the chairman.

Circumstances having now thrown Mr. Bright into great prominence as a political leader, he suffered that penalty of misrepresentation which at some period or other befalls every public man. Amongst his detractors was Mr. Garth, M.P., who, in an address to the electors of Guildford, charged Mr. Bright with never having dared to stand for his own town, with refusing to subscribe to the cotton famine relief fund, and with wishing to support the suffering workmen by loans, that he might have them as serfs at his beck and call. The complete groundlessness of these charges having been proved in a

correspondence which took place, Mr. Garth endeavoured to explain them away. Upon this Mr. Bright wrote: 'On a review of your speech and your letter, I came to this conclusion—that you wished to get into Parliament, and were not particular as to the path which might lead to it. You threw dirt during your canvass, doubtless knowing that if needful you could eat it afterwards. There are many men who go through dirt to dignities, and I suspect you have no objection to be one of them.' Amongst others who misrepresented Mr. Bright at this time was Mr. H. D. Seymour, who, in an article in the *Fortnightly Review*, founded certain political charges upon incorrect reports of Mr. Bright's speeches. Unlike some clerical and other libellers, however, Mr. Seymour at once made reparation for that which had really been done through inadvertence.

The best answer to Mr. Bright's detractors was furnished on the 25th of January, 1867, when twelve hundred of the workpeople of Messrs. John Bright and Brothers voluntarily assembled in the Public Hall at Rochdale, and presented an address to the hon. member for Birmingham, expressive of their entire sympathy with, and sincere respect for him, under the malignant slanders which had been urged against him as their employer. The address, which was moved, seconded, and supported by working men in Mr. Bright's employ—after speaking of the attacks on his private character as base and unfounded, said he had always endeavoured to improve their moral, social, and intellectual well-being, while as a public character his best endeavours had been made to raise the great wealth-producing class to the full right of citizenship. The address further prayed that his life, as an employer and as a statesman, might long be spared. Mr. Bright, who was much moved by this spontaneous expression of feeling, suitably replied to the address, observing, amid loud cheers, that every honourable man in Rochdale knew there was not a shadow or a shade of foundation for the charges which had been made against him. His only crime was that he had resisted the monopolists of political power—that since the first hour he stepped upon a public platform and took part in political questions he had pleaded for the rights of the millions of the people in the country. Referring to what had been said of him with regard to the Factory Act, Mr. Bright observed that the establishment of Free Trade about the time when the Factory Act passed caused so great an increase of trade and demand for labour, that the Factory Act itself had been made to

work with a success that in all probability it would not have met with if the changes to which he had referred had not been made. He thought it possible—and hoped it was certain—that at some period even the present hours of labour might be to a further extent shortened. Mr. T. B. Potter and Mr. Goldwin Smith followed Mr. Bright with speeches expressive of sympathy.

The townspeople of Rochdale also took up the matter, and a few days later, on the 30th of January, a public meeting was held, presided over by Mr. H. Kelsall, J. P. An address similar in purport to that drawn up by his workmen was presented to Mr. Bright, and the hon. gentleman in his reply glanced at his twenty-five years of political life, and said that the great cardinal principle upon which he had acted was, that the law and the administration of the law in this country should regard with just and equal eye all classes of people. He had learnt from his earliest youth to feel a sympathy which he could never express in words for those men who occupied a humble social rank, and who had few of those compensations which gave to men who were better off the main charms of life.

Great interest continued to be manifested in the Reform question, in anticipation of the Ministerial plans expected in the ensuing session. On the 11th of February, a demonstration was organized by the Reform League in Trafalgar Square, and the whole of the square and its approaches were densely crowded. The procession—whose numbers were variously estimated at from 20,000 to 100,000 —marched from the Square to the Agricultural Hall, Islington. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh viewed the procession from one of the upper windows of the United Service Club. At the Athenæum, opposite, the Archbishop of York, several other prelates, and Mr. Charles Dickens, were upon the balconies. In St. James's Street many members of the aristocracy and of both Houses of Parliament were to be seen at the windows of the various houses. The procession, which passed through the streets in the most orderly manner, arrived at the Agricultural Hall shortly before six o'clock. The Hall was speedily filled in all parts, and thousands of persons were unable to obtain admission. The speakers at the meeting included Mr. Beales, Professor Rogers, The O'Donoghue, Mr. T. B. Potter, M. P., Mr. P. A. Taylor, M. P., Mr. Ernest Jones, Professor Beesly, Mr. Bradlaugh, and the Rev. A. O'Neil. The Government propositions were read out at the meeting, and severely condemned; and the Ministry was declared to be unworthy of the confidence of the country.

It was on the same day, in the House of Commons, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Disraeli) introduced the Government scheme of Reform, announcing that it was his intention to proceed by means of resolutions. The two principles which had been observed in framing them were, that no borough was to be wholly disfranchised except for bribery, and that in re-arranging the districts representatives would be given to all places reasonably entitled to the privilege. On the 25th Mr. Disraeli submitted the details of his scheme. The occupation franchise in boroughs was to be reduced to £6 rating; in counties to £20; the franchise was also to be extended to any person having £50 in the funds, £30 in savings bank for a year, payment of 20s. of direct taxes, a University degree, the profession of a clergyman or any minister of religion, any learned profession, or a certificated schoolmaster. Yarmouth, Lancaster, Reigate, and Totnes were to be disfranchised, and twenty-three boroughs with less than seven thousand inhabitants were to have one member each. Of the thirty seats thus placed at the disposal of the House, he proposed to allot fourteen to new boroughs in the northern and midland districts, fifteen to counties, and one to the London University. The total expected addition to borough constituencies would be 212,000, and to county constituencies 206,500. From a phrase used by a member of the Cabinet subsequently, this measure came to be spoken of as 'The Ten Minutes' Bill.'

Mr. Lowe objected to proceeding by resolution, and called for a plain, simple bill at once.

Mr. Bright said he agreed with Mr. Lowe that to discuss the resolutions would be a waste of time. The Ministry had probably not made up their minds on the resolutions till within the last two days. Mr. Bright commented on the new franchises now proposed, and said that the computations as to the number of votes to be created were like the computations in 1859—nothing but loose guessing. 'It is estimated that there may be an increase in the boroughs of 130,000, and of 82,000 voters on the ratepaying qualification. And then it is proposed to make these childish new franchises from the savings banks and direct taxation. By a bill now before the House, a ratcatcher who keeps four dogs will pay twenty shillings of direct taxes, and will come of course into one of the new constituencies which are to save the country from destruction. Will these proposals settle, or do anything to settle, the question of Reform? It is assumed that the House is unanimous for something, and will have a Reform Bill; but there is an

essential difference, and a perilous one, between a Reform Bill and a reform.'

Mr. Bright then criticized the details of the scheme, and observed, in conclusion, 'If the Government are willing to produce a substantial and satisfactory bill, I—although I am not of their party, and they have opposed all the propositions in which I am concerned—should not factiously oppose them. But having changed sides, having become Reformers, having decided at half-past two o'clock to-day to allow the right hon. gentleman to appear in a new character as a Reformer in this House, I ask you, for your own sake and for his sake, and, what is worth infinitely more than your reputation or his position, for the interest of this great nation, and for the satisfaction of an excited and anxious people, that this measure, if it is to be passed this session, shall be one at least that should release me and other members who are in favour of Reform from further discussion and agitation of the question during our Parliamentary life.'

At a meeting of the Liberal members of the House of Commons, held at Mr. Gladstone's house, 289 being present, it was unanimously agreed to support an amendment setting aside the resolutions. On the evening of the same day, however, February 26th, Mr. Disraeli announced that the Government would abandon their resolutions, and produce a Reform Bill on an early date. Mr. Bright recommended the Government to bring in a Franchise Bill first; for in that branch of the question lay the greatest grievance—the exclusion of the working classes.

The resolve of a majority of the Cabinet to introduce a 'real and satisfactory' measure led to the resignation of three of the Ministers—General Peel, the Earl of Carnarvon, and Lord Cranborne. Ministerial explanations ensued in both Houses. In the Lower House, Lord Cranborne said that it was virtually household suffrage which the Cabinet had decided upon, and Mr. Lowe asked whether it was to bring in household suffrage that he and others combined to turn out the late Government. Mr. Bright advised members not to take counsel from Mr. Lowe, for he opposed the extension of the franchise. For himself, he (Mr. Bright) had always said that household suffrage was the true suffrage for boroughs. He appealed to the Government to deal with the working class as they would deal with other sections of the community, in a liberal and generous manner, and not to attempt by any tricks to shut them out from that which they had a right to expect. If they could not go so far as he was inclined, he asked them to try something else, but he asked them to let their propositions be simple and

intelligible. The working classes, who read every syllable that was uttered in that House on the subject, were not to be deceived; and their feeling in this matter was to be gathered from the motto on a banner carried by the carpenters at a late trades' demonstration, expressed, not in choice English, but in language that would be well understood, 'Deal with us on the square; we have been chiselled long enough.'

On the 18th of March, Mr. Disraeli brought forward his new bill in the House of Commons. The proposals he then made were briefly as follows: That in boroughs the electors should be all who paid rates, or twenty shillings in direct taxes; the franchise should also be extended to certain classes qualified by education, or by the possession of a stated amount of property in the Funds, or in savings banks; rated householders to have a second vote. As in the former bill, seats were to be taken from the smaller boroughs and those recently reported against for bribery, and given to more populous places—fourteen to boroughs, fifteen to counties, and one to London University. As a security against the power of mere numbers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer described minutely a system of checks, based on residence, rating, and dual voting.

When the second reading came to be moved, Mr. Gladstone severely criticised the bill, and enumerated its chief defects as follows: 1, the absence of a lodger franchise; 2, the absence of means to prevent the traffic in votes that would infallibly arise in a large scheme affecting the lowest class of householders; 3, the vexatious distinctions between compound householders and direct ratepayers which the bill retained and aggravated; 4, the tax-paying franchise; 5, the dual vote; 6, the inadequacy of the redistribution scheme; 7, the high figure of the county franchise; 8, the use of voting papers; 9, the fancy or special franchises.

During the debate, Mr. Bright spoke with great force and sarcasm. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, he said, had been trading for several weeks on this measure, whose real object was to introduce to the suffrage about as many men as would be admitted by an £8 tenure. If this were so, why talk of household franchise? The Government were renewing the error of 1832—they were continuing the exclusion of the working classes from the franchise. If this were the limit of the concession, the course they were pursuing was a perilous course; for as a set-off to this concession, the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to give a vote to 200,000 of a higher class.

Mr. Bright passed in review the various parts of the bill, and added:

'The bill as a whole I regard as very unsatisfactory. It has marks upon it of being the product, not of the friends, but of the enemies of Reform. It is wonderful what clever men will do when a dozen of them are shut up in a room. Now look at the Chancellor of the Exchequer: he is a marvel of cleverness, or else he would not have been for twenty years at the head of hon. gentlemen opposite, to lead them into this—what shall I call it?—great difficulty at last. (*Laughter.*) Take the right hon. member who sits next to him, representing a very learned university Cambridge (Mr. Walpole). Take the President of the Poor Law Board (Mr. Gathorne Hardy), who represents the wisdom, and it may be, to some extent, the prejudices of Oxford. Take the right hon. member for Droitwich (Sir John Pakington). I fear to speak of so potent a personage. (*Laughter.*) At this very moment he directs the whole of the armies of the empire. There is not a soldier who shivers amid the snows of Canada, or who sweats under the sun of India, but shivers and sweats under the influence of the right hon. gentleman. (*Renewed laughter.*) It was only the other day he was Lord High Admiral of England. His "march was on the mountain wave," his "home was on the deep." (*Laughter.*) But all these gentlemen retire into a mysterious apartment in Downing Street, and they set to work and concoct a Reform Bill; and with all their capacity, it seems to me to come out a bill marvellously like that which would have been made by the hon. member for North Lincolnshire (Mr. Banks Stanhope), who last night gave us an account of his conversion. Anything more affecting could hardly be heard in any class-meeting. But he spoke of "we" all this time—what "we" did, what determinations "we" had come to. In thinking it over to-day, I have come to the conclusion that he is the author of this bill. (*Laughter.*) . . . It would leave the greatest question of our time absolutely unsolved. Sir, it seems to me impossible to assist a Government which will not tell us frankly what it intends, what it stands by, what it will get rid of—which asks us to go into its confidence, and yet is probably the most reticent Government that ever sat on those benches. If any gentlemen on this side were to treat you as you treated us last year, I should denounce them with the strongest language I could use. I hate the ways, I scorn the purposes of faction; and if I am driven now, or at any stage of this bill, to oppose the Government, it is because the measure they have offered to us bears upon its face marks of deception and disappointment, and because I will be no party to any bill which would cheat the great body of my countrymen of the possession of that power in this House on which they have set their hearts, and which, as I believe, by the constitution of this country they may most justly claim.' (*Loud cheers.*)

The bill was eventually read a second time without a division, it being perceived from Mr. Disraeli's speech at the close of the debate that the Government were open to pressure with regard to many of its provisions. In committee, a great many substantial amendments were carried by the Opposition, but a knot of Liberal members, designated the 'Tea-room party,' broke away from Mr. Gladstone on the policy of binding the committee by instructions. When the division on the rate-paying clauses came to be taken, on the 11th of April, there was a Government majority of 21. On the 18th Mr. Gladstone intimated his withdrawal from the leadership of the Liberal

advised, however, that the proposed meeting in Hyde Park was perfectly legal, and Lord Derby announced that they had no intention of putting it down by force. The demonstration was accordingly held on the 6th, and the people assembled in large numbers. Speeches were made at ten different platforms, and resolutions carried in accordance with the views of the League upon the Reform question. The whole of the proceedings were conducted in the most orderly and exemplary manner. These events led to the retirement of Mr. Walpole from the Home Office.

Mr. Bright laboured assiduously to secure such changes in the Government bill as should make it acceptable. Speaking at a meeting in St. James's Hall on the 15th of May, he said that he considered the basis of the borough franchise bad; and that a requirement that all men should pay a certain rate—the poor rate—would inevitably, in the lowest class of voters, afford at least great opportunity for corruption. If the bill passed as it then stood, it would only offer to 245,000 men, in all the boroughs of England and Wales, the elective franchise, on condition that every one of them had resided twelve months in the borough, paid his rate, and taken whatever step might be necessary to see that his name was left neither off the rate-book nor off the register.

It does not come within our province to follow in detail the course of the intricate and protracted discussions which arose in the House of Commons on the various provisions of the measure. Such vexed questions as that of the compound householder became enveloped in a cloud of hazy rhetoric, until few could grasp the nature and extent of the amendments proposed. Mr. Bright rose on many occasions—interposing with observations, not set speeches,—always, of course, with the one definite object in view of extending the suffrage and riddling it of those restrictions by which it was entangled in the Government bill. But there was one question discussed, that of voting papers, upon which he expressed himself at length, and we shall therefore pause for a short time over this speech.

By the Government bill it was proposed to permit the vote to be given by voting papers, and not to require personal attendance at the poll. The Opposition objected to this proposal on the ground that it would afford opportunity for fraud, and for practices inconsistent with freedom of election. In the end the proposition of the Government was rejected. Mr. Bright said that the arguments used during the debate should end, after this wide extension of the suffrage, in establishing vote by

ballot. As to the question immediately before the House, it was contrary to the interests of the country, and opposed to the purity and reality of the electoral system, that they should give inducements to obtain votes in counties where people did not reside, for the purpose of interfering with the real and honest representation of the residents of a county. The committee which sat on the subject rejected the proposition in regard to the country at large, and decided on special grounds that the plan might only be safely adopted in respect to the Universities. His own belief was that the system was bad. It had not the good effect of open voting. 'It escapes from that which you have always claimed as the great advantage of open voting—that is, the general publicity and influence of public opinion; and what you call the salutary effect of a man performing a great public duty in the face of his fellow-men.'

It was claimed that the system was permissive; but whilst it altogether sheltered a man from public opinion, it did not in the least give him the advantages of secret voting. Lord Cranborne had spoken of sick people and nervous people, and others who could not go to the poll, but he (Mr. Bright) did not believe that there was any appreciable number of voters who could not go to the poll for the reasons assigned. It was mainly for the rich that this system was devised. 'And what happens when the voting papers have been signed and sent in? You establish one of the most hateful and most unheard-of things that can be imagined, which is the giving of votes by proxy. I understand that lately there has been a discussion in another place on the subject of voting by proxy, and there is a general impression that this system—which no man defends upon any principle—will not last long. Therefore, I hope the House of Commons will not now attempt to establish in any shape anything so unprincipled and hateful with regard to our Parliamentary elections as this would prove to be. Because, when any person has received a number of voting-papers from any borough or part of a county, it is quite clear that he can either poll them or not, as he thinks fit. He can hold them back, or make a traffic of them. They are not exactly bank-notes; but as he holds them in his hand, he may traffic with them as if they were bank-notes. Now, I think it

> "Better to bear the ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of."'

The whole question was this—whether the system of polling should be changed to what is right, or whether it should be a

general system of voting through the Post Office. Let them have either open voting or the ballot. If the present proposition were adopted, it would create amazement and consternation throughout the country.

The Reform Bill passed the House of Commons on the 15th of July, and on the following day it was read a first time in the House of Lords. The second reading was taken a few days later without a division; but when the measure was discussed in committee, many important changes were introduced, which had the effect of rendering the bill more conservative and reactionary. In closing the debate on the third reading, Lord Derby said they were taking a leap in the dark, but he entertained a strong hope that the extended franchise would be the means of placing the institutions of the country on a firmer basis.

The Lords' amendments excited considerable indignation in the country, and meetings were held denouncing them. At a demonstration held at Manchester, Mr. Bright strongly animadverted upon the alterations. He could not, he said, but regard them as the offspring and spawn of feeble minds. He condemned and repudiated the whole scheme from beginning to end, and said that any one who adopted the principle of the representation of minorities must shake the faith and lose the confidence of every true friend of reform and of freedom.

On the 8th of August the amendments came on for consideration in the House of Commons. One of the most important—that passed at the instigation of Lord Cairns, for the representation of minorities—was warmly opposed by Mr. Bright, who delivered a lengthy and forcible speech on the whole subject.

He said that he considered it to be a restriction of electoral power, and pointed out to those who, like Mr. Mill, supported it more as a mode of representing everybody than, like Lord Cranborne, as a corrective of the democratic tendencies of the bill, that it would create such ill-feeling in the country, as for a long time to prevent the consideration of any comprehensive scheme such as Mr. Hare's. To Mr. Disraeli's single plea for accepting it he replied that the Commons had originally rejected the idea by a large majority, and insisted that on a point affecting their own constitution the vote of the House of Commons was of more authority than that of the Lords. The scheme had never been asked for by any constituency; it had never been discussed in the country; and the least the House could do was to suspend its decision until the idea had become more familiar. 'There are jugglers whom we have

seen exhibiting their clever tricks—pouring out port, champagne, milk, and water from one and the same bottle. The proposal resembles this. The scheme is, that an electoral body, by a peculiar contrivance hitherto unknown, and I will undertake to say, if ever heard of, only despised, shall not be asked, but shall be made to do this—to return two members to sit on this side, and one on the other, or *vice versâ*.'

Mr. Bright further argued that the clause would extinguish the political life of the country; it would nullify the boon conferred on the four great towns, each of which would for the future, in all divisions on great political questions, be represented by one member. He avowed that, had he suspected the House would sanction this scheme, he would have voted against giving these towns a third member; and after showing that it would be inapplicable to bye-elections, caused either by the death or the appointment to office of some member representing a minority, he concluded by a powerful denunciation of the scheme as utterly inconsistent with constitutional principles. 'Let us get rid of all feeling,' he said, 'except that this change has been recommended to us by the House of Lords, in which there cannot be either the same knowledge or the same interest in the matter which exists in this House. Let us look at this simply as it refers to the great body in whose names we sit and speak here. Let us look at it in reference to that grand old freedom which our forefathers struggled for, and secured, and maintained, and the advantages of which, from the day of our birth till this hour, we have been constantly enjoying. If this proposal had come before this House at the time when the great men, the giants of the English constitution, sat in this House, they would have treated it in a manner far less decorous than we shall treat it. There is no name that appears among the great men of that day, parents of English freedom, which would not have been found among the names of those who shall this day say "No!" to the mischievous proposition sent down to us by the House of Lords.'

The Commons, however, adopted the Lords' amendment by 253 votes to 204. The Reform Bill received the Royal assent on the 15th of August.

With all its defects, judging from the point of view of Mr. Bright and his supporters, the measure, on the whole, was a great concession to the principles advocated by the member for Birmingham. As Lord Cranborne said, the Government bill had been modified according to the demands made by Mr. Gladstone, on the principles laid down by Mr. Bright. From

a strongly Conservative measure it was transformed into an extremely Liberal one. Men of all parties, however they might differ as to the details of the bill, recognized in it a settlement for a long period of a question which had given rise to an agitation now extending over a series of years, and which threatened still further to disturb the peace of the country, until the representation of the people was placed upon a more satisfactory and durable basis.

CHAPTER VIII.

IRISH QUESTIONS—1866–68.

Mr. Bright's Advocacy of Irish Questions.—Disturbed Condition of Ireland in 1866.—The Coercion Bill.—Mr. Bright on the Irish People.—He appeals to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli to settle the Irish Question.—Renewal of the Coercion Act.—Mr. Bright on Mr. Roebuck.—Visit of the former to Ireland.—Letter from Mr. John B. Dillon and the O'Donoghue.—Mr. Bright's Speech at Dublin.—Arguments for Disestablishment and Land Reform.—Eloquent Peroration.—The Ballot and the Electoral System.—Scheme for the Sale of Land in Ireland.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Irish Reforms.—Irish Debate in the House of Commons.—Mr. Maguire's Motion.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—He examines the Government Policy.—His own Plan for a Farmer Proprietary.—Religious Equality in Ireland a Necessity.—Outline of a Scheme for Disestablishment.—Important Declaration by Mr. Gladstone.—Mr. Maguire withdraws his Motion.—Mr. Gladstone introduces his Irish Church Resolutions.—Prolonged Debate—Powerful Speech by Mr. Bright in support of the Resolutions.—Mr. Gladstone's Motion carried by a large majority.—Ministers advise a Dissolution.—Their Conduct is severely condemned.—Meeting in St. James's Hall against Disestablishment.—The Irish Church Resolutions carried in the House of Commons.—Mr. Bright sternly rebukes Mr. Disraeli.—The Irish Church Suspensory Bill introduced.—It passes the Commons, but is rejected by the Lords.—Mr. Bright advocates Disestablishment at Liverpool.—Justice to Ireland.—He visits Ireland in 1868.—Speech at Limerick.—The General Election.—Great Liberal Majority.—Mr. Gladstone becomes Premier.

In the memorable period of legislation extending from 1866 to the second year of Mr. Gladstone's first Administration, Mr. Bright was not only unresting in the cause of Reform, but indefatigable in pleading the claims of Ireland. His eloquent advocacy had much to do with accelerating two of the greatest measures which were passed in the interest of Ireland before the Land Act of 1881, namely, the Act for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church, and the Act of 1870 for the amendment of the system of land tenure in Ireland. It will be convenient to give a separate treatment in this place to Mr. Bright's addresses upon Irish questions during the years above mentioned.

At the commencement of the year 1866, Ireland, from her unhappily disturbed condition, occupied a prominent position in the public eye. The Fenian conspiracy, which in the preceding year had occasioned much disquietude, still occupied the

full attention of the Irish Executive. Frequent arrests and seizures of arms were made, and great alarm was felt in certain districts by the loyal portion of the community. The Government, unable to suppress disaffection by ordinary means, were driven on the assembling of Parliament to propose the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland. As the measure was very urgent, the two Houses met on Saturday, the 17th of February, for the purpose of carrying the necessary bill through its various stages, in order that it might come into operation on the following Monday, the 19th.

Sir George Grey introduced the measure in the House of Commons, citing facts which had come to the knowledge of the Executive in its justification. He read extracts from articles in the Irish papers, and from documents seized by the police, showing that the object of the conspirators was to wrest Ireland from the British Crown, and that men, arms, and money were to be supplied from America for that purpose. Irish-American emissaries were dispersed throughout the country, swearing in members, endeavoring to seduce the troops from their allegiance, and holding out false hopes of material assistance from the United States Government. The Lord Lieutenant (Lord Wodehouse) had reported that the disaffection of the population in certain counties, such as Cork, Tipperary, Waterford, and Dublin, was alarming, and every day it was spreading more and more throughout the country.

Mr. Bright, following Mr. Disraeli, expressed the shame and humiliation which he felt at being called on for a second time in a Parliamentary career of twenty-two years to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland. Yet he did not believe that the Secretary of State had overstated his case for the purpose of inducing the House to consent to his proposition. He believed that if the majority of the people of Ireland, counted fairly out, had their will, and if they had the power, they would unmoor the island from its fastenings in the deep, and move it at least two thousand miles to the west. And he believed, further, that if by conspiracy, or insurrection, or by that open agitation to which alone he ever would give any favour or consent, they could shake off the authority, he would not say of the English Crown, but of the Imperial Parliament, they would gladly do so.

Few statesmen have spoken so generously of the Irish people as Mr. Bright, and he now went on to say: 'An hon. member from Ireland a few nights ago referred to the character of the Irish people. He said, and I believe it is true, that there is no other Christian nation with which we are acquainted amongst

whom crime of the ordinary character, as we reckon it in this country, is so rare as it is amongst his countrymen. He might have said, also, that there is no people—whatever they may be at home—more industrious than his countrymen in every other country but their own. He might have said more; that they are people of a cheerful and joyous temperament. He might have said more than this; that they are singularly grateful for kindnesses shown to them, and that of all the people of our race they are filled with the strongest sentiment of veneration. And yet, with such materials and with such a people, after centuries of government—after sixty-five years of government by this House—you have them embittered against your rule, and anxious only to throw off the authority of the Crown and Queen of these realms.' There was chronic insurrection in Ireland, and the causes of this he traced to the unjust legislation of the Imperial Parliament, which, since the Union, had passed many Coercion Bills, but only three really good measures for Ireland—the Catholic Emancipation Act, under the danger of civil war; the Poor Relief Act; and the Encumbered Estates Act, under the pressure of a terrible famine.

That there had been improved administration Mr. Bright admitted, but he denied that there had been any statesmanship shown in dealing with the Irish question, and he doubted whether any of the Ministers in his time had comprehended it. This he attributed in a large measure to the system of parties; and in the following eloquent passage he called upon Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli to suspend their contests for office, and to combine in an effort to assertain the causes of Irish discontent and to apply a remedy:—

'I put the question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He is the only man of this Government whom I have heard of late years who has spoken as if he comprehended this question, and he made a speech in the last session of Parliament which was not without its influence both in England and in Ireland. I should like to ask him whether this Irish question is above the stature of himself and of his colleagues. If it be, I ask them to come down from the high places which they occupy, and try and learn the art of legislation and government before they practise it. I myself believe, if we could divest ourselves of the feeling engendered by party strife, we might come to some better result. Take the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Is there in any legislative assembly in the world a man, as the world judges, of more transcendent capacity? I will say even, is there a man with a more honest wish to do good to the country in which he occupies so conspicuous a place? (*Cheers.*)

'Take the right hon. gentleman opposite, the leader of the Opposition—is there in any legislative assembly in the world, at this moment, a man leading an Opposition of more genius for his position, who has given proof in every way but one in which proof can be given that he is competent to the highest duties of the highest offices of the State? Well, but these men—great men whom we on this side

and you on that side, to a large extent, admire and follow—fight for office, and the result is they sit alternately, one on this side and one on that. But suppose it were possible for these men, with their intellects, with their far-reaching vision, to examine this question thoroughly, and to say for once, whether this leads to office and to the miserable notoriety that men call fame which springs from office, or not, "If it be possible, we will act with loyalty to the Sovereign and justice to the people; and if it be possible, we will make Ireland a strength and not a weakness to the British Empire." It is from this fighting with party, and for party, and for the gains which party gives, that there is so little result from this great intellect of such great men as these. (*Cheers.*) Like the captive Samson of old—

> "They grind in brazen fetters, under task,
> With their Heaven-gifted strength;"

and the country and the world gain little by those faculties which God has given them for the blessing of the country and the world.'

Mr. Bright asked how it was that these eminent statesmen and their colleagues had not succeeded in making the Irish as loyal to the Crown as the English. He and those who thought with him had been charged by members in that House, and by writers in the press, with dislike to the institutions and even disloyalty to the dynasty which ruled in England. 'There can be nothing more offensive, nothing more unjust, nothing more utterly false. We who ask Parliament, in dealing with Ireland, to deal with it upon the unchangeable principles of justice, are the friends of the people, and the really loyal advisers and supporters of the throne.' The hon. gentleman next pointed out that the fact of Fenianism having to some extent a foreign origin aggravated the present difficulty, and he asked why Englishmen and Scotchmen, when they emigrated, did not, like Irishmen, carry with them an inveterate hatred to the Government and institutions of the land of their birth. He declared that it was not in human nature to live content under such institutions as existed in Ireland, and when this insurrection was suppressed there would still remain the seeds of another crop of disaffection. He believed there was a mode of making Ireland loyal, and he threw the responsibility of discovering it on the Government and on the Imperial Parliament. He did not oppose the bill, but he hoped the Government would not allow the debate to close without giving the nation some hope that before long measures would be introduced which would make Ireland as loyal and contented as Great Britain. 'If every man outside the walls of this House who has the interest of the whole empire at heart were to speak here, what would he say to this House? Let not one day elapse, let not another session pass, until you have done something to wipe off this blot—for

blot it is upon the reign of the Queen, and scandal it is to the civilization and to the justice of the people of this country.'

Mr. Gladstone, in his reply, said the Government would be ready at a fitting time to consider any measures which might be proposed for the benefit of Ireland, but the paramount duty of the House that day was to strengthen the hands of the Executive in the preservation of law and order.

Leave was given to introduce the bill by 364 to 6 votes, and it passed through all its stages without further discussion. It was also carried through the Lords with a like rapidity; and as soon as it had passed, a telegram was sent to Earl Granville, at Osborne, apprising him of the result. The Queen then affixed her signature to the document authorizing the Commissioners to give her assent to the bill. At a quarter past twelve the same night, the Royal Commissioners appeared in the House of Lords, and made known the commands of Her Majesty. The measure thus became law under circumstances of unexampled celerity.

The Act was renewed in the following session, when Mr. Bright again spoke on behalf of remedial legislation, and defended the Irish members for not resting content under merely coercive legislation. He also happily retorted upon Mr. Roebuck, amid the cheers and laughter of the House. Mr. Roebuck's passion for contradiction, as those will remember who are acquainted with his public speeches, was something abnormal. On this occasion, he had not only contradicted Mr. Maguire, but had made him say something which he had never uttered. It was to this Mr. Bright referred when he observed, 'I said the other day that the hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Roebuck) was always ready to contradict everybody. He gets up now, and not only contradicts my hon. friend, but makes him make a speech he never made—and then he contradicts that. (*Laughter.*) He reminds me of a case I saw the other day in the newspapers, in which a man objected to serve on a jury. The Judge said he was wrong in making the objection, because every man should be willing to serve as a juror, and therefore he could not excuse him. The man then said, "I am not fit to be a juryman, for never in my whole life was I able to agree with any one." (*Laughter.*) But the Judge encouraged him to act, and told him he should serve as a juryman. He then said that was not his only infirmity, for he had discovered that he was not able to agree with himself. That is the case with the hon. and learned gentleman.' (*Renewed laughter.*)

In October, 1866, Mr. Bright visited Dublin, and was enter-

tained at a banquet given to him in the Rotunda in that city. The invitation was forwarded to him on behalf of an important section of Irish members of Parliament and of other influential persons.

We insert the letter which accompanied the invitation, with Mr. Bright's reply. The first signature to the letter is that of Mr. John Blake Dillon, the father of Mr. John Dillon, the present member for Tipperary. Mr. Dillon was not at the banquet; to the great sorrow of his many friends he died before the event occurred in which he had taken so deep an interest.

'7, LOWER ORMOND QUAY, DUBLIN,
August 21*st*, 1866.

'Dear Mr. Bright,

'An invitation to a public banquet in Dublin goes to you by this day's mail.

'The signatures represent a large mass of public opinion in this country, the great majority of those who join in the invitation being persons who fill some representative office. Collectively they are entitled to tender to you, as they do in the present invitation, the respect and confidence of the Irish people.

'We trust you will on this occasion overcome your declared reluctance to be present at such demonstrations. The banquet, if you accept it, is certain to be a great success. It would have the best effect in dispelling some mischievous illusions of which a portion of our people are the victims, and in cementing that union of British and Irish Liberals which we believe to be vitally important to both under present circumstances.

'Assuming that you will accept, we leave the day entirely to your own selection, merely suggesting that an early day in October would probably be acceptable to the majority of those who will attend the banquet.

'We remain very faithfully yours,

'JOHN B. DILLON.
'O'DONOGHUE.'

'ROCHDALE,
Sept. 1, 1866.

'Dear Mr. Dillon,

'I am afraid you will think me long in answering your letter of the 21st ult., and in replying to the invitation to the proposed banquet, which duly reached me. The invitation is a very remarkable one, and I cannot doubt that it represents an important amount of public opinion in Ireland. To myself it is a testimony of approval and kind feeling which I

estimate most highly, although it involves me in no little difficulty, for I have been hoping for a quiet autumn, with an absence of public meetings and of public labour. .

'I am not confident that my coming to Ireland will be of any service, but as so many amongst you are of opinion that something may be done to make a more perfect union between the Liberals of Ireland and the Liberal party here, with a view to wiser legislation for your country and ours, I have not felt at liberty to refuse the invitation which has been sent to me.

'I accept it with much gratitude to those from whom it comes, and with a hope that in doing so I am not stepping beyond the bounds of what seems to be my duty.

'Some time during the month of October will, I hope, be convenient to all concerned, but I must ask you to leave the precise day to be fixed two or three weeks hence. About the middle of the month will probably be the best time for me, if there be no objection to it on the part of my friends in Dublin.

'With many thanks to you and to those on whose behalf you have written to me,

'I am very sincerely yours,

'John Bright.

'John B. Dillon, Esq., M.P.'

The gathering, which took place on the 30th of October, was a very imposing one. The invitation was signed by upwards of twenty members of Parliament, and by a large number of influential members of the Liberal party in Ireland. The O'Donoghue, M.P., occupied the chair, and in opening the proceedings said that, in the name of Ireland, they gave to John Bright, the matchless advocate of popular rights, and their tried and trusted friend, a thousand welcomes to the shores of Ireland.

Mr. Bright began his speech by saying how grateful it was to his heart that such a number of his countrymen had approved generally of the political course he had pursued. His position was a difficult if honourable one, for he had written to his friend Sir John Gray to put an extinguisher upon this project of a public reception. But the matter had gone too far for him to refuse the invitation. He then paid a high tribute to one who had signed the invitation, but had since passed away—affirming that amongst all her worthy sons, Ireland had no worthier and no nobler son than John Blake Dillon. Coming to the Irish problem, Mr. Bright said he would endeavour to

answer the question—'How is it that we, the Imperial Parliament, cannot act so as to bring about in Ireland contentment and tranquillity, and a solid union between Ireland and Great Britain? And that means, further, How can we improve the condition and change the minds of the people of Ireland?' Whatever defect there was in the Irish race, came not from their character, but from their history, and from the conditions to which they had been subjected. He cited facts to prove this; and alluding to the charge that the great misfortune of Ireland was in the existence of political agitators, he said: 'As to that, I may state that the most distinguished political agitators that have appeared during the last hundred years in Ireland are Grattan and O'Connell, and I should say that he must be either a very stupid or a very base Irishman who would wish to erase the achievements of Grattan and O'Connell from the annals of his country.'

Some said that the priests were the cause of much of the discontent of Ireland; but he believed there was no class of men who had a deeper interest in a prosperous and numerous community than they had; and he believed that no men had suffered more from witnessing the miseries of the Irish people. Mr. Bright, having referred to the hardship of the Established Church in Ireland, and the Land Laws, said that Ireland had been a land of evictions—a word scarcely known in any other civilized country. It was a country, too, in which a most desolating famine had prevailed.

'It is a country where there has been, for generations past, a general sense of wrong, out of which has grown a state of chronic insurrection; and at this very moment when I speak, the general safeguard of constitutional liberty is withdrawn, and we meet in this hall, and I speak here to-night, rather by the forbearance and permission of the Irish Executive, than under the protection of the common safeguards of the rights and liberties of the people of the United Kingdom.

'I venture to say that this is a miserable and a humiliating picture to draw of this country. Bear in mind that I am not speaking of Poland suffering under the conquest of Russia. There is a gentleman, now a candidate for an Irish county, who is very great upon the wrongs of Poland; but I have found him always in the House of Commons taking sides with that great party which has systematically supported the wrongs of Ireland. I am not speaking about Hungary, or of Venice as she was under the rule of Austria, or of the Greeks under the dominion of the Turk, but I am speaking of Ireland—part of the United Kingdom—part of that which boasts itself to be the most civilized and the most Christian nation in the world.'

Mr. Bright went on to say that he believed it was impossible for a class to govern a nation wisely and justly. In Ireland, there had been a field in which all the principles of the Tory

party had had their complete experiment and development; and yet the kingdom had been continually weakened—the harmony of the empire had been disturbed, and the mischief had not been confined to the United Kingdom, but had spread to the colonies. Canada was now defending itself from Irishmen hostile to England who had settled in the United States. The Government of Lord Derby was doing exactly that which the Government of Lord North did nearly a hundred years before—it was sending out troops across the Atlantic to fight Irishmen who were the bitter enemies of England on the American continent. If that were true, what conclusion could they come to? He cited two great evils which were chiefly at the root of this discontent—namely, the Established Church, and the tenure of land. 'I believe,' said Mr. Bright, 'that the removal of the Established Church would create a new political and social atmosphere in Ireland—that it would make the people feel that old things had passed away—that all things had become new—that an Irishman and his faith were no longer to be condemned in his own country—and that ,for the first time the English people and the English Parliament intended to do full justice to Ireland.' As to the land, the operation of the present custem was, that in Ireland they had bad farming, bad dwelling-houses, bad temper, everything bad connected with the occupation and the culture of land in Ireland. One of the results—a result most appalling—was that the population were fleeing from the country and seeking a refuge in a distant land. The people were looking more to America than they were looking to England. And when they considered how many Irishmen had found a refuge in America, he did not know how they could wonder at this attitude on their part.

Then followed this very striking passage in Mr. Bright's address:—

'You will recollect that when the ancient Hebrew prophet prayed in his captivity, he prayed with his window open towards Jerusalem. You know that the followers of Mahommed, when they pray, turn their faces towards Mecca. When the Irish peasant asks for food, and freedom, and blessing, his eye follows the setting sun; the aspirations of his heart reach beyond the wide Atlantic, and in spirit he grasps hands with the great Republic of the West. If this be so, I say, then, that the disease is not only serious, but it is even desperate; but desperate as it is, I believe there is a certain remedy for it, if the people and the Parliament of the United Kingdom are willing to apply it. Now, if it were possible, would it not be worth while to change the sentiments and improve the condition of the Irish cultivators of the soil? If we were to remove the State Church, there would be still a Church, but it would not be a supremacy Church. The Catholics of Ireland have no idea of saying that Protestantism in its various forms shall not exist in their island. There would still be a Church, but it would be a free Church of a section of a free people.'

Who objected to this? asked the speaker. The men who were in favour of religious supremacy. Ireland had no greater enemy than the Protestant State Church. He then showed that neither honest Protestantism nor the honest landowner had any reason to fear the proposed change. As to the land question, he maintained that the interests of the public required that Parliament should secure to the tenant the property which he had invested on his farm. But more than that, he asked why in Ireland they should tolerate the law of primogeniture and the system of entails? He would go further still, and deal with the question of absenteeism. He proposed that a Parliamentary Commission should be empowered to treat for the purchase of large estates belonging to the English nobility, with a view of selling them to the tenantry of Ireland. 'Now, here are some of them: the present Prime Minister, Lord Derby, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Fitzwilliam, the Marquis of Hertford, the Marquis of Bath, the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Devonshire, and many others. They have estates in Ireland; many of them, I dare say, are just as well managed as any other estates in the country; but what you want is to restore to Ireland a middle-class proprietary of the soil; and I venture to say that if these estates could be purchased and could be sold out farm by farm to the tenant occupiers in Ireland, that it would be infinitely better, in a conservative sense, than that they should belong to great proprietors living out of the country.'

The disease was desperate, Mr. Bright reiterated, and the remedy must be searching. 'I assert that the present system of government with regard to the Church and with regard to the land has failed disastrously in Ireland. Under it Ireland has become an object of commiseration to the whole world, and a discredit to the United Kingdom of which it forms a part. It is a land of many sorrows. Men fight for supremacy, and call it Protestantism; they fight for evil and bad laws, and they call it acting for the defence of property.' If Irishmen were united, they might do almost anything they liked. Having advocated the extension of the constituencies, the right hon. gentleman closed with this very effective peroration:—

'In a speech delivered the other day in Belfast, much was said of the enforcement of the law; but there was nothing said about any change or amendment in the law. With this party, terror is their only specific,—they have no confidence in allegiance except where there is no power to rebel. Now, I differ from these men entirely. I believe that at the root of a general discontent there is in all countries a general grievance and general suffering. (*Cheers.*) The surface of society is not incessantly disturbed without a cause. I recollect in the poem of the greatest of Italian poets, he tells us that as he saw in

vision the Stygian lake, and stood upon its banks, he observed the constant commotion upon the surface of the pool, and his good instructor and guide explained to him the cause of it:

> "This, too, for certain know, that underneath
> The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs
> Into these bubbles make the surface heave,
> As thine eye tells thee wheresoe'er it turns."

(*Cheers.*) And I say that in Ireland, for generations back, the misery and the wrongs of the people have made their sign, and have found a voice in constant insurrection and disorder. I have said that Ireland is a country of many wrongs and of many sorrows. Her past lies almost all in shadow. Her present is full of anxiety and peril. Her future depends on the power of her people to substitute equality and justice for supremecy, and a generous patriotism for the spirit of faction. In the effort now making in Great Britain to create a free representation of the people you have the deepest interest. The people never wish to suffer, and they never wish to inflict injustice. (*Cheers.*) They have no sympathy with the wrong-doer, whether in Great Britain or in Ireland; and when they are fairly represented in the Imperial Parliament, as I hope they will one day be, they will speedily give an effective and final answer to that old question of the Parliament of Kilkenny, "How comes it to pass that the King has never been the richer for Ireland?" (*Loud cheers.*)

Two days after delivering the above speech, Mr. Bright attended a public meeting held in the Mechanics' Institute, Dublin, when an address from the trades of the city was presented to him. Mr. James Haughton, J.P., occupied the chair. Mr. Bright's speech on this occasion was chiefly devoted to the Reform question, and this branch of it we have dealt with elsewhere. After showing the inequalities of Irish Parliamentary representation, however, and insisting upon the necessity for the ballot, Mr. Bright pointed out that a change in the electoral system would aid Ireland in obtaining justice. He continued: 'When I have thought of the condition of Ireland, of its sorrows and wrongs, of the discredit that its condition has brought upon the English, the Irish, and the British name, I have thought if I could be in all other things the same, but by birth an Irishman, there is not a town in this island I would not visit for the purpose of discussing the great Irish question, and of rousing my countrymen to some great and united action. I do not believe in the necessity of widespread and perpetual misery. I do not believe that we are placed on this island, and on this earth, that one man may be great and wealthy, and revel in every profuse indulgence, and five, six, nine or ten men shall suffer the abject misery which we see so commonly in the world. With your soil, your climate, and your active and spirited race, I know not what you might not do. There have been reasons to my mind why soil and climate, and the labour

of your population, have not produced general comfort and competence for all.'

Mr. Bright next enlarged upon the necessity for a cordial union, remarking that he did not ask them to join hands with supremacy and oppression, whether in Ireland or England. What he asked was that they would open their heart of hearts, and join hands for a real and thorough working union for freedom with the people of Great Britain. The hon. gentleman then re-stated his plan for making many thousands of Irish farmers the owners of their farms. He said that he now gave a little further explanation on this subject, in order that those who had commented upon his plan should not repeat the very untrue and dishonourable comments they had made. He would not speak against the aristocracy, or against property, or against anything that was good. If Parliament were to appoint a Commission, and give it, say, at first up to the amount of five millions sterling, the power to negotiate or treat with the great families in England who had estates in Ireland, it was probable that some of those great estates might be bought at a not very unreasonable price. This would be the cheapest money that the Imperial Parliament ever expended, even though it became possessed of these estates at a cost considerably above the market price.

The speaker next showed how he proposed to work out his plan, and brought forward the following illustration :—

'I will assume that this Commission is in possession of a considerable estate bought from some present owner of it. I will take one farm, which I will assume to be worth £1,000, for which the present tenant is paying a rent of £50 a year. He has no lease; he has no security; he makes almost no improvement of any kind; and he is not quite sure whether, when he has saved a little more money, he will not take his family off to the United States. Now we will assume ourselves, if you like to be that Commission, and that we have before us the farmer who is the tenant on that particular farm for which he pays £50 a year, without lease or security, and which I assume to be worth £1,000. The Government, I believe, lends money to Irish landowners for drainage purposes at about 3½ per cent. per annum. Suppose the Government were to say to this farmer, "You would not have any objection to become possessed of this farm?" "No, not the slightest," he might answer, "but how is that to be done?" In this way: you may pay £50 a year, that is 5 per cent. on one thousand pounds; the Government can afford to do these transactions at 3½ per cent.; if you will pay £60 a year for a given number of years, which any of the actuaries of the insurance offices or any good arithmetician may soon calculate,—if you will pay £60 for your rent instead of £50, it may be for perhaps twenty years,—at the end of that time the farm will be yours without any further payment.

'I want you to understand how this is. If the farmer paid ten pounds a year more than he now pays, towards buying his farm, and if the £1,000 the Government would pay for the farm would not cost the Government more than £35, the difference between £35 and £60 being £25, would be the sum

which that farmer, in his rent, would be paying to the Commission, that is,—to the Government,—for the redemption of his farm. Thus, at the end of a very few years, the farmer would possess his own farm, having a perfect security in the meantime. Nobody could turn him out if he paid his rent, and nobody could rob him for any improvement he made on his land. . . . You will understand that I do not propose a forced purchase, or any confiscation. I would undertake even to give—if I were the Government—to every one of these landlords 20 per cent. more for his estate than it will fetch in the market in London or in Dublin; and I say that to do this would produce a marvellous change in the sentiments of the people, and in the condition of agriculture in Ireland.'

Mr. Bright said that he had been falsely charged with saying bitter things against the aristocracy, whereas he admitted that many of them were men of as undoubted patriotism as any in the island. He had also been told that if he lived in Ireland he would discover that it was the people who were wrong, and not the Government, or legislation. In 1849, and again in 1852, he had gone to Ireland expressly to examine this question. There was also no man in England who had more fully studied the evidence given before the celebrated Devon Commission in regard to Ireland than he had, and he was therefore in a position to discuss the Irish question. He asserted that the plans, the theories, the policy, the legislation of his opponents in this matter had all failed, signally, deplorably, disastrously, ignominiously; and therefore he had a right to come in and offer the people of Ireland, as he would offer to the people of Great Britain and the Imperial Parliament, a wise and just policy upon this question. He concluded by observing that if in past times he had felt an unquenchable sympathy with the sufferings of the Irish people, they might rely upon it that if there were an Irish member to speak for Ireland, he would find him heartily at his side.

In addressing his constituents at Birmingham on the 4th of February, 1868, Mr. Bright returned to the Irish question, and denied that he was hostile to the Protestant Church or to Protestantism, for he was himself a Protestant of Protestants. When the cheering which followed this declaration had subsided, he added that he had no kind of religious sympathy with many of the practices of the Roman Catholic Church, and when he spoke of the Protestant Church he was speaking purely of a political State organization. If any one said that with a Parliament in Dublin the Irish people would permit such a political State Church to exist, he must surely believe that Ireland was no better than one huge lunatic asylum. Then why should our Parliament maintain a Church against the opinions and repeated protests of the great ma-

jority of the Irish people? A supremacy party had been established with the idea of preserving the Union with England, and yet it had become, more than all other institutions, that which most imperilled the Union. They must no longer attempt to govern Ireland upon the principles and prejudices of the supremacy party. Mr. Bright, before closing his speech, related the following anecdote: 'I recollect when Daniel O'Connell was in the House of Commons, and on many occasions I sat by him. I asked him on one occasion if he would write me an autograph for a lady, a relative of mine, who wished to preserve it. He went into the lobby, and, taking a pen, he wrote these four lines:—

> "Within that land was many a malcontent,
> Who cursed the tyranny to which he bent;
> That land full many a wringing despot saw
> Who worked his tyranny in form of law."'

One of the most important as well as one of the most comprehensive speeches Mr. Bright ever delivered on Ireland, was that spoken in the House of Commons on the 13th of March, 1868, during the debate on Mr. Maguire's motion that the House should resolve itself into a Committee to take the condition of Ireland into immediate consideration. It was during this debate also that Mr. Gladstone made his momentous declaration against the Irish Church.

The discussion began on the 10th, when the member for Cork brought forward his motion. The chief causes of discontent in Ireland, he said, were the land grievance and the existence of the Established Church. Until the tenant got security for his improvements, and was protected from the rapacity or caprice of his landlord, it would be vain to hope for tranquillity. Ireland would not be satisfied with another Royal Commission. Mr. Maguire described the Irish Church as a scandal and a monstrous anomaly, which Englishmen, if applied to themselves, would not tolerate for a single hour.

The Earl of Mayo brought forward the Irish proposals of the Conservative Government. He stated that a Commission would be appointed to inquire into the whole state of the relations between landlord and tenant: and in the meantime a bill would be introduced providing for an easy compensation for money laid out in improvements, and another for rendering more efficient the working of Irish railways. The general education of the people was already under the consideration of a Commission, and it was proposed to grant a Charter to a

Roman Catholic University. With regard to the Irish Church, it was not proposed to take any immediate action.

Mr. Horsman, Mr. J. Stuart Mill, and others, expressed their dissatisfaction with the proposals of the Government.

Mr. Bright rose on the 13th. He first described the state of Ireland, and referred to the alleged increase of material prosperity. 'If,' he said,—'and this has been already referred to by more than one speaker,—if it be true that with a considerable improvement in the physical condition of the people—if it be true that with a universality of education much beyond that which exists in this island—if it be true that after the measures that have been passed, and have been useful, there still remains in Ireland, first of all, what is called Fenianism, which is a reckless and daring exhibition of feeling—beyond that a very wide discontent and disloyalty—and beyond that, amongst the whole of the Roman Catholic population, universal dissatisfaction—and if that be so, surely my hon. friend the member for Cork—one of the most useful and eminent of the representatives of Ireland—is right in bringing this question before the House. And there is no question at this moment that we could possibly discuss connected with the interest or honour of the people that approaches in gravity and magnitude to that now before us.' This great effect must have some cause, and they were unworthy of their positions as members of that House, and representatives of the people, if they did not endeavour to discover the cause, and to apply to it a remedy.

But that cause was well known to the Government, particularly to the Premier (Mr. Disraeli), as was shown by his celebrated phrase, 'an absentee aristocracy and an alien Church.' Dealing with the first of these two causes, Mr. Bright examined minutely the provisions of Lord Mayo's Bill, which he contended would never work, from the multiplicity of transactions it would involve—there being 540,000 landholders or tenants in Ireland; and he preferred his own plan for the encouragement of a farmer proprietary, which he proceeded to detail. He added 'I am in favour of more proprietors; and some, of course, will be small and some will be large; but it would be quite possible for Parliament, if it thought fit to attempt anything of this kind, to fix a limit below which it would not assist the owner to sell or the purchaser to buy. I believe that you can establish a class of moderate proprietors, who will form a body intermediate between the great owners of land and those who are absolutely landless, which will be of immense service in giving steadiness, loyalty, and peace to the whole population of the

island.' But he was not proposing to buy up the whole of the land; he was only proposing to buy in cases where men were willing to sell.

If it were right, Mr. Bright urged, to lend money to tenants for improvements, as Lord Mayo proposed, why not lend money to tenants to buy land? Protesting again that he had no desire to interfere with the rights of property—for he would not apply his plan except in the instances mentioned—he showed that, without paying more annually than his present rent, a tenant in a little over thirty years might become the owner of his farm. His object was to secure in Ireland some few score thousands of a steady class between the large landowners and the landless—a class which would be thoroughly loyal, and would be the zealous enemy of Fenianism. He admitted that the time might arrive when Mr. Mill's land remedy (which has been described as 'confiscation') would be necessary for Ireland; but he held that in every country where there was no class but landlord and tenant, with no manufactures to absorb the population, the condition of the cultivator of the soil must inevitably be degraded. Mr. Mill had scruples on the question of the ballot, but even he believed that it might be tried with advantage in Ireland. Being greeted with some cries of 'No, no!' Mr. Bright said, 'Do hon. gentlemen think it not necessary? I was talking, only two days ago, to a member of this House who sat on one of the Irish election committees—the Waterford committee, I think,—and he said: "We could not unseat the members, though the evidence went to show a frightful state of things; it was one of the most orderly elections they have in that country—only three men killed and twenty-eight seriously wounded." After all, we may smile, and some of you may laugh at this, but it is not a thing to be laughed at. It is a very serious matter but it exists in no country in the world where the ballot is in operation.'

Coming next to the Church question, Mr. Bright described the Ministerial proposal as grotesque and imbecile. The establishment of a Catholic University could have no effect on Fenianism; it had been received with general disfavour; and, like the dual vote of last year, when it had served its object it would probably disappear. For the evil which they had to combat, the remedy offered by the Government was no remedy at all. On this head Mr. Bright amusingly observed—

'It reminds me of an anecdote which is related by Addison. Writing about the curious things which happened in his time, he says that there was a man who made his living by cheating the country people. I do not know whether

it was in Buckinghamshire or not. (*Laughter.*) He was not a Cabinet Minister—he was only a mountebank—(*great laughter*),—and he set up a stall, and sold pills that were very good against the earthquake. (*Roars of laughter.*) Well, that is about the state of things that we are in now. There is an earthquake in Ireland. Does anybody doubt it? I will not go into the evidence of it, but I will say that there has been a most extraordinary alarm—some of it extravagant, I will admit—throughout the whole of the three kingdoms; and although Fenianism may be but a low, a reckless, and an ignorant conspiracy, the noble lord has admitted that there is discontent and disaffection in the country; and when the member for one of the great cities of Ireland comes forward and asks the Imperial Parliament to discuss this great question—this social and political earthquake under which Ireland is heaving—the noble lord comes forward and offers that there shall be a clerically-governed endowed University for the sons, I suppose, of the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland. I have never heard a more unstatesmanlike or more unsatisfactory proposition; and I believe the entire disfavour with which it has been received in this House is only a proper representation of the condemnation which it will receive from the great majority of the people of the three kingdoms.' (*Cheers.*)

Mr. Bright said he would not join in the offensive terms used by Mr. Horsman and Mr. Lowe; there could be no good in attacking either the Catholic population or the Catholic hierarchy of Ireland. They had their duty straight before them, which was to do both the hierarchy and the people justice. Protestant ascendancy in Ireland, as represented by a State Church, he believed to be doomed, and perfect religious equality on the voluntary principle must be established in its place. Sir Robert Peel had increased the grant to Maynooth, and he (Mr. Bright) was one of the very few persons on the Liberal side of the House who opposed the grant. He was as kindly disposed to the Catholics as Sir Robert Peel, but he did not believe this was the path of tranquillization, and if it were tried for the pacification of Ireland now it would fail. There might be difficulties in carrying out perfect religious equality, but they must be faced; and, considering Lord Russell's plan for the division of Church property amongst various bodies—though he spoke of its author with great respect—as forty years too late, Mr. Bright developed a plan of his own for the purpose. He would disestablish and disendow all Churches alike; the *Regium Donum* must go as well as the Maynooth grant. But as the life interests of the Protestant bishops and priests must be preserved, so must the life interests of the Presbyterian ministers and of Maynooth College be provided for. Where the congregations of existing Protestant churches would undertake to repair them and the parsonage houses, they might be left in possession of them. Of course, no more bishops, except on the footing of Scotch bishops, would be created; and if the State granted any provision at the outset to either of the three re-

ligious bodies, it must become its absolute property, entirely free from the control of the State. The whole of the Church property being Irish property, it must be disposed of in accordance with the desires of the Irish people. Though not sanguine that Mr. Disraeli would be able to deal radically with it, he should yet be delighted to co-operate with him in settling this question.

Exhorting Protestants, Catholics, and Nonconformists alike to get rid of passion in discussing this subject, Mr. Bright thus concluded:—

'We are, after all, of one religion. I imagine that there will come a time in the history of the world when men will be astonished that Catholics and Protestants have had so much animosity against and suspicion of each other. I accept the belief in a grand passage which I once met with in the writings of the illustrious founder of the colony of Pennsylvania. He says that "The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers." Now, may I ask the House to act in this spirit, and then our work will be easy. (*Cheers.*) The noble lord, towards the conclusion of his speech, spoke of the cloud which rests at present over Ireland. It is a dark and heavy cloud, and its darkness extends over the feelings of men in all parts of the British Empire. But there is a consolation which we may all take to ourselves. An inspired king and bard and prophet has left us words which are not only the expression of a fact, but which we may take as the utterance of a prophecy. He says, "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Let us try in this matter to be upright. Let us try to be just. (*Cheers.*) That cloud will be dispelled. The dangers which surround us will vanish, and we may yet have the happiness of leaving to our children the heritage of an honourable citizenship in a united and prosperous empire.' (*Loud cheers.*)

This peroration—which is one of the finest and yet simplest of Mr. Bright's efforts—and indeed the whole speech, made a marked impression upon the House. Ministers began to feel that the policy they had foreshadowded was inadequate, and their fears were turned into absolute certainty when Mr. Gladstone spoke on the last night of the debate.

The right hon. gentleman emphatically declared, amidst the vehement cheers of the Opposition, that the Established Church of Ireland must cease to exist. Religious equality must be established, difficult though the operation might be; and Mr. Gladstone said that on the whole he agreed very much with Mr. Bright's plan for effecting this great operation.

Mr. Disraeli bewailed his lot at being thus suddenly called upon to deal with this great crisis, and expressed his conviction that if the Church in Ireland were violently abolished, it would add immensely to the elements of discord, violence, and confiscation.

Satisfied with the result of the debate, Mr. Maguire withdrew his motion. A few days later Mr. Gladstone tabled his resolutions, affirming the necessity for disestablishing and disendowing the Established Church of Ireland. Lord Stanley gave notice of an amendment to the effect that the question ought to be reserved for the decision of a new Parliament.

On the 30th of March the debate began. It was opened by Mr. Gladstone, in a powerful speech, delivered in a densely crowded House, and amidst manifestations of eager and absorbing interest. Lord Stanley also spoke at length and the debate was carried on for four nights by adjournments. Lord Cranborne (now Marquis of Salisbury) said that while ready to meet the resolutions with a plain, straightforward negative, he declined to support an amendment the object of which was merely to gain time, and to enable the Government to keep the cards in their hands for another year, to shuffle as they pleased. Mr. Gathorne Hardy delivered a 'no surrender' speech—which was warmly cheered by the Conservatives—affirming that he would not be a party to any measure for disestablishing the Church which upheld the light of the Reformation in Ireland.

Mr. Bright spoke with great vigour in support of the resolutions. He began by remarking on the considerable change, if not of view, at least of expression, which had characterized the debate. Even Lord Cranborne had seemed to admit that the time was near at hand for surrendering his cherished principle of an Establishment, while the Government spoke with different voice from night to night. Mr. Hardy, in a very good speech, though it was one from which he (Mr. Bright) differed, had answered Lord Stanley, and probably Mr. Disraeli would answer Mr. Hardy; this was the result of Government by a minority. Mr. Bright was very felicitous and effective in exposing the difficulties of the situation:—

'All this shows us that the House is in a wrong position. We have a minority in office which cannot assert its own views with safety, nor can it with any more safety adopt our views; and thus, when, on that side of the House, a Minister gets up and makes what is called a liberal speech on this question to us who are in opposition, that creates discontent; and then another Minister rises and makes a speech of an exactly opposite character, to reconcile that discontent. There is, in fact, confusion and chaos in the House. (*Hear, hear.*) We have a Government which is not a Government, and we have an Opposition which is not an Opposition, because really we do not oppose anything that you propose. Your propositions are not based upon your own principles, which you held when you sat on this side of the House, but on our principles, and therefore we are not in opposition at all, but we help you as much as possible to enforce, not your own principles, but ours. Whatever compensation it may be to right hon. gentlemen who sit on that bench and enjoy the dignities and emoluments of office, I think there are many honourable men on whom I am

looking at this moment who do not observe the course of these proceedings with entire satisfaction.' (*Cheers.*)

Dealing with the main question, Mr. Bright pointed out that the disestablishment, which had been described as a 'revolution,' affected little more than half a million of people, or 100,000 families, about equal to the population of Glasgow, or Liverpool, or Manchester. And yet it was for this that they had twelve bishops and archbishops, and an expensive Establishment. If the proposed change were effected, the Irish Protestants would only be left in the same position as the majority of the Scotch people, nearly the whole of the Welsh people, half of the English people, and the whole of our colonists. There were only two pretences on which a State Church could be justified —religious and political. As a religious institution for the conversion of the Roman Catholics, the Irish Church had been a deplorable failure. 'What is more than that, I think it can be demonstrated that the existence of the Protestant Church in Ireland, whether missionary or not in pretence, has not only not converted the Catholics themselves, but has made it absolutely impossible that anybody else, or any other Church, should convert them. Because, if you look how the Church has been connected with the State, and with the politics of the country, with the supremacy of the landed proprietors, with the supremacy of the Protestant party, with all the dark records of the past, you will see the effect has been to make Catholicism in Ireland not only a faith, but a patriotism.' The political influence of Rome Mr. Bright held to be a great calamity. As a political institution, he continued, the Irish Church had been equally a failure; for although the State for years had defended it by the sword, the present condition of Ireland was anarchy subdued by force.

Disestablishment, Mr. Bright asserted—notwithstanding a few faint denials—was desired by an influential and wise minority of Irish Protestants. From peer to peasant the Roman Catholics were unanimous in its favour, and the people of England and Scotland would eagerly welcome this great act of atonement for past errors. If such evils had been produced in any of our colonies by a State Church, Parliament would have abolished it at once. As to any danger to the Church of England, her greatest enemy was not Mr. Miall and the Liberation Society, but zeal—the chief peril of all establishments—whether developed in Ritualism or Evangelicalism. As long as she preserved internal harmony, the boldest prophet would not predict the day of her downfall.

The speaker then reasoned calmly with the Ministerialists, and dealt with their fears. 'Why should you be afraid? Even children, we know, can be induced, by repeated practice, to go into a dark room without fear. You have always, somebody said the other night, lions in the path; but I will not dignify them with the name of lions—they are but hobgoblins. Now, when you have seen and handled them,—as you have a great many times since I have been in the habit of speaking face to face with you,—these things are found, after all, to be only hobgoblins; you have learned, after all, that they are perfectly harmless; and when you thought we were doing you harm, and upsetting the constitution, you have found that, after all, we were doing you good, and that the constitution was rather stronger than it was before. Let me point out for a moment some of these changes that were found at the time to be of great difficulty, but have been found to be very wise and good since.'

Mr. Bright then referred to the changes which had been effected in the colonial system, mainly through the efforts of Sir William Molesworth and Joseph Hume; to Sir Robert Peel's financial reforms; and to the abolition of the protective system. 'Free Trade was a frightful monster. But the protective system is gone; and now every candid man amongst you will admit that industry, being more free throughout the country, is better rewarded, and that the land, which you said would go out of cultivation, and become of no value, sells for a higher price in the market than it ever brought before.' The balance of power, too, which was once considered the beginning and end of our foreign policy, was gone, and yet England was just as much respected as when she was ready to meddle in every stupid quarrel that occurred upon the Continent of Europe. Lastly, there was the question of the representation. It had been a hobgoblin for years, but the Conservatives had found out last year that it was not so monstrous a thing after all, and had supported, almost enthusiastically, Mr. Disraeli's Reform Bill. And the Prime Minister would tell them that, as a consequence of the enlarged suffrage, Parliament would henceforth be more strong and more venerated by the people than it had ever been before. If that was true of Parliament, it was equally true of the Throne.

Mr. Bright said he did not mention these things by way of reproach, for all had to learn. On this question of the Irish Church, Mr. Gladstone would probably admit that his opinions had been ripening for a series of years. That was greatly to

the credit, not only of his head, but of his heart. 'We have seen even amongst you a progress in many things,—a progress which is most gratifying to me—that is a very small matter; but it is a very wholesome indication that the minds of men are becoming more open to the consideration of great principles in connection with great public questions. And this gives us promise that in future we shall have—as, no doubt, we shall have—a Government more in accordance with public opinion and public interests than we have had in past times. In my opinion, the changes that have been made in our time are the glory of our time; and I believe that our posterity will regard them as the natural and blessed fruits of the growth of intelligence in our day. I mention these things to urge you not to close your ears to the arguments, nor to close your hearts to the impressions of justice which must assail you with regard to this question which is now being debated so much in Great Britain and Ireland.'

A very remarkable meeting held at Limerick, said Mr. Bright, in concluding, had shown that there was a far more healthy tone of mind in Ireland than there had been for a very long period—an indication of a growing belief that Parliament was sufficiently strong to carry this measure of justice and reconciliation. He hoped they would not increase the discontent of Ireland, and play the game of the Fenians, by refusing this great boon:—

'Let us take this Irish State Church; let us take it, not with a rude—I am against rudeness and harshness in legislative action—but if not with a rude, still with a resolute grasp. If you adopt the policy we recommend, you will pluck up a weed which pollutes the air. ("*Oh, oh.*") I will give hon. gentlemen consolation in the conclusion of the sentence—I say you will pluck up a weed which pollutes the air; but you will leave a free Protestant Church, which will be hereafter an ornament and a grace to all those who may be brought within the range of its influence. (*Cheers.*) Sir, I said in the beginning of my observations that the people of three kingdoms are waiting with anxious suspense for the solution of this question. Ireland waits and longs. I appeal to the right hon. gentleman the member for Limerick (Mr. Monsell); I appeal to that meeting, the character of which he can describe, and perhaps may describe, to the House; and I say that Ireland waits and longs for a great act of reconciliation. I say, further, that England and Scotland are eager to make atonement for past crimes and past errors; and I say, yet further, that it depends upon us, this House of Commons, this Imperial Parliament, whether that reconciliation shall take place, and whether that atonement shall at length be made.' (*Cheers.*)

The debate closed with able speeches by Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone, and Lord Stanley's amendment was lost by a majority of 60. When Mr. Gladstone's motion to go into Committee was put, there appeared—For the motion, 328;

against, 272; majority, 56. This was a larger majority than had been expected for Mr. Gladstone's motion. The House went into Committee; but after the first resolution had been formally put, the Chairman was directed to report progress. Meetings called by the friends and opponents of Disestablishment respectively were now held in London and the provinces. The question caused great excitement, and much intemperate language was used, especially by the supporters of the Irish Church, whose animadversions upon Mr. Gladstone were violent and personal in the extreme.

After the Easter recess the contest was resumed in the House of Commons. At the close of a long debate, Mr. Gladstone's resolution condemnatory of the Irish Establishment was carried by 330 to 265, showing a majority against the Government of 65. The former majority in favor of Disestablishment having thus been increased, Mr. Disraeli rose, and said that as the division had altered the relations of the Government with the House, he moved that the House should adjourn, in order that the Government might consider their position.

On the 4th of May Ministers tendered explanations in both Houses. In the Commons, Mr. Disraeli stated that he had advised Her Majesty to dissolve Parliament, but at the same time placed the resignation of himself and his colleagues at Her Majesty's disposal. The Queen took time for consideration, and at a second interview declined to accept the Premier's resignation, but signified her readiness to dissolve Parliament as soon as the state of public business permitted. Under these circumstances, he (Mr. Disraeli) had advised Her Majesty that there might be a dissolution in the autumn.

This explanation was deemed very unsatisfactory by the Opposition, who held that the Government should have resigned without qualification, this being the true constitutional mode of dealing with such a crisis.

Mr. Gladstone protested emphatically against Mr. Disraeli's unconstitutional doctrine that every Minister carried in his pocket a right to dissolve a Parliament not elected under his influence. Mr. Lowe said Parliament was asked to give a ten months' lease of office to a Government which neither trusted it nor was trusted by it. Mr. Bright was also very indignant, and commented upon the humiliating attitude in which the Government was placed, maintaining that it was merely for the sake of prolonging his own term of office that Mr. Disraeli had made this outrageous demand on the indulgence of Parliament. But the Government had no right, he asserted, to a dissolution;

and they had, therefore, no claim to remain in office when they could carry nothing of their own but a sixpenny income tax. Mr. Bright cited precedents in connection with this matter, and said that no decent pretence had been offered for departing from the constitutional course of resigning after such signally adverse votes. The Irish and Scotch bills could be more easily passed by a Government really friendly to Reform, and the only result of the present action would be that the Irish Church could not be disestablished until 1870. On the following evening Mr. Disraeli said he had advised a dissolution without any reference to the consideration of old or new constituencies. In reply to further questions, he denied that he had been the first to introduce the Queen's name improperly into the discussion, and said that if any other difficulty arose it would be necessary for him to seek another audience, and to take the pleasure of Her Majesty.

A meeting was held in St. James's Hall on the 6th of May to protest against the disestablishment of the Irish Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury presided, and resolutions were proposed and spoken to by the Lord Mayor, the Bishop of Oxford, the Bishop of London, and Dean Stanley. The uncompromising temper of the meeting will be best understood when we state that an observation made by Dean Stanley, to the effect that the traditions of the Liberal party in this country were all in favour of the union between Church and State, was received with such a storm of disapprobation that the Dean was unable to gain a further hearing, and was compelled to resume his seat.

On the following day Mr. Gladstone's second and third Irish Church resolutions were carried in Committee in the House of Commons without a division. A debate followed concerning the withdrawal of the Maynooth and other grants, and considerable difference of opinion was manifested amongst the Liberal members. Mr. Disraeli was not present during the proceedings, and displeasure was expressed at his absence. On returning to the House, the Premier said it was not his duty to obtrude his advice on the House with respect to every possible topic. The discussion, he added, had only anticipated what he always expected would be the case, that there would be a quarrel among the Liberal party over the division of the plunder.

These observations drew a remarkable and pointed philippic from Mr. Bright. Having observed that there had been nothing to warrant Mr. Disraeli's parting shot against the resolutions, and that there were few thoughtful men on public

questions in the kingdom who were not in favour of the measure for disestablishment, Mr. Bright thus retorted upon the Prime Minister:—

'I have held consistently for twenty years the conviction which the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government himself held then, and which, if it were possible now to put him under an accurate examination from which he could not flinch, he would be obliged to say that he holds now; because, on a recent occasion, he admitted that the main sentiment of that speech which he delivered twenty-five years ago was right. But I am in a different position from the right hon. gentleman. I have not been endeavouring to climb the ladder of Parliamentary promotion and notoriety. ("*Oh,*" *and cheers.*) No, Sir, I have only had the single object—so far as I have had anything to do with Irish questions—to promote what appeared to be just to that country, and which would tend to the advantage of the United Kingdom. The right hon. gentleman the other night, in a manner at once pompous and servile, talked at large of the interviews which he had had with his Sovereign. I venture to say that a Minister who deceives his Sovereign is as guilty as the conspirator who would dethrone her. ("*Oh,*" *and cheers.*) I do not charge the right hon. gentleman with deceiving his Sovereign; but if he has not changed the opinion which he held twenty-five years ago, and which he has said in the main was right, then I fear that he has not stated all that it was his duty to state in the interviews which he had with his Sovereign. Let me tell hon. gentlemen opposite, and the right hon. gentleman in particular, that any man in this country who puts the Sovereign in the front of a great struggle like this into which it may be we are about to enter—who points to the Irish people, and says from the floor of this House, "Your Queen holds the flag under which we, the enemies of religious equality and justice to Ireland, are marshalled,"—I say that the Minister who does that is guilty of a very high crime and a great misdemeanour against his Sovereign and against his country. And there is no honour, and there is no reputation, there is no glory, there is no future fame that any Minister can gain by conduct like this that will acquit him to posterity of one of the most grievous offences against his country which a Prime Minister can possibly commit.' (*Cheers.*)

The House was in an electrical condition, and every word of this strong condemnation of the Premier told both upon it and also upon Mr. Disraeli. The latter himself never made a more excited and angry retort upon a political opponent, and that he felt it keenly was apparent from his brief reply, in which he charged Mr. Bright with indulging in stale invective, and challenged him to bring his charges formally before the House.

Mr. Gladstone's resolutions affirming the necessity for disestablishing the Irish Church, and abolishing the grant of Maynooth and the *Regium Donum*, were reported to the House on the 8th of May. In answer to the address presented to her, the Queen replied that she would not allow her interest in the temporalities of the Church in Ireland to stand in the way of the consideration of the proposed measure, and on the 13th Mr. Gladstone introduced his Irish Church Suspensory Bill. The debate on the second reading took place on the 22nd, when the

chief speakers were Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Gathorne Hardy, and Mr. Disraeli. On a division, there appeared—For the second reading, 312; against, 258; majority, 54. The bill passed through its remaining stages without difficulty.

When the measure came before the House of Lords, it was debated with unusual ability and eloquence on both sides. The speeches of Lords Granville, Derby, Carnarvon, and Salisbury, the Duke of Argyll, the Bishop of Oxford, and the Lord Chancellor were especially powerful. The second reading was negatived on a division by 192 to 97; the rejection of the measure by the Lords did not come with surprise upon the Opposition, who now looked forward to the impending general election, anticipating that the country would pronounce unmistakably in favour of Mr. Gladstone's disestablishment policy.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bright actively pleaded the cause of justice to Ireland in the country. On the 3rd of June, 1868, he was present by invitation at the annual meeting of the Welsh National Reform Association, held at Liverpool. Mr. W. Williams, a member of the Liverpool Town Council, presided, and the object of the gathering was to assist the progress of Reform in the Principality, and in particular the more equitable distribution of Parliamentary representation.

Mr. Bright began his address by saying that the chairman was not far wrong when he described Liverpool as the capital city of the principality of Wales, for although geographically it was in the county of Lancaster, it contained not less than sixty thousand natives of Wales—a larger number than were found in any purely Welsh town. Referring next to the great question of the continuance or removal of the Protestant State Church in Ireland, he said he hoped one of the results of that meeting would be that the verdict of the nation should not be given without the voice of Wales being heard in it. The Welsh were geographically nearest to Ireland; they had themselves had a remarkable experience in Church matters, and they had a strong wish that justice should be done to Ireland. The speaker said there had never been any real union between Great Britain and Ireland, and the inevitable result of three hundred years of government, such as Ireland had experienced had been three hundred years of misery, of discontent, of conspiracy, and of insurrection. It was only about one hundred years ago that the cruel rule of the English Government had relaxed, and not until 1829 that a Roman Catholic was permitted to take his seat in the House of Commons. Since 1829 there had been a much more merciful and just administration. But the supremacy had been con-

tinued, and the sign and symbol of it was the Protestant Establishment in Ireland.

The real question before the country, said Mr. Bright, was not the question of State establishments. It was one purely and wholly political. The House of Commons, by an absolute majority of all the members of the House, had declared against the Irish Establishment; and whether a man accepted the principle of State Churches as a wise one, or whether he rejected it on his (Mr. Bright's) grounds, they must reject the Irish Establishment. 'Still more so on the principle of equal justice in the nation, on the principle of what is best and what is beneficial for the empire, we must in either case equally and emphatically condemn the Irish State Church. Suppose it were proposed for the first time to found a State Church in Ireland, is there one single being out of Bedlam—I doubt if there is one in Bedlam—who would even suggest that the State Church to be founded in Ireland should be of the Protestant Episcopal creed?' The speaker then went on to observe that out of a population of six million persons in Ireland, 4,500,000 belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Half a million belonged to the Protestant Episcopal Church, and about half a million to the Presbyterian Church. The census gave under 700,000 of Church Protestants, but this overstated the numbers. 'Now, if we knew, being these four and a half millions, that this little Church of half a million was planted among us by those who had conquered our fathers, if we knew also that this little Church was associated with everything that had been hostile to our national interests and national prosperity, and if we knew further that it absorbed incomes amounting to not less than £700,000 or £800,000 sterling per year, these incomes being derived from national property amounting to probably £13,000,000 or £14,000,000 sterling,—I say that if we were of those four and a half millions, let me ask every man of you whether we should not feel that we had a just cause of complaint, and that there was a national grievance in our country that required to be speedily redressed.'

The Church in England or Wales, he continued, was not a symbol of conquest: but the Irish Church was a great imperial question. It was a question of the empire, of union, or of civil strife; it was a question of strength or weakness to the nation. Who wished to make the Irish Church permanent? The Tory party in Parliament and the country. This party had been opposed to almost every measure of wisdom and of justice that had been proposed in regard to either England or Ireland. Mr.

Bright then showed that in 1833 there were in connection with the Irish Church not less than twenty-two bishops, receiving an income of more than £130,000 a year, and from 1,500 to 2,000 clergymen,—all to teach a form of Protestantism to a population not larger than the population of Liverpool. The number of bishops was ultimately reduced from twenty-two to twelve, but not without a great outcry. He then went on to remark that at St. James's Hall recently the archbishops and bishops of the Church of England had been on the 'stump,' as they described it in America; and when so admirable a man as the Dean of Westminster began in his speech to approach the question in a moderate and rational manner, he was positively hissed down. He (Mr. Bright) was only sorry that the Dean mistook his duty in finding his way to that meeting. There were various ideas as to the object of the meeting. One said it was a meeting of a trades union; another, not less ingenious or less accurate, said it was a meeting of shareholders in a very lucrative concern, who fancied by some possibility their dividends might be reduced. Now he had no objection to these important and dignified persons discussing public questions; he wished they would do it oftener. But he never knew them meet to promote peace and to condemn war. When the great question of slavery agitated the country, there was no combined and unanimous movement in regard to it. The archbishops and bishops never deemed it their duty to express an opinion upon the Corn Laws. Nor had they come forward in any combined manner to expose the sufferings and denounce the wrongs practised upon their poorer countrymen. But now, when they thought that the Church of England was being menaced by the proceedings being taken in regard to the Church in Ireland, they were all up in arms, and one would suppose that the whole country and Christianity were going at once to ruin.

This withering rebuke was as fully justified as Charles Dickens's stricture upon the 'right reverends and wrong reverends of every order,' from another point of view. Mr. Bright went on to observe that all that Mr. Gladstone and his supporters now proposed to do was to place the Protestant Episcopalians of Ireland in the same position exactly as the Welsh Free Churches, the Wesleyan Churches, the Free Churches of Scotland, and the Colonial and American Churches. But they gave them the advantage of their existing buildings. Yet the archbishops and bishops who met in St. James's Hall cried out as though they were about to perpetrate the grossest and most intolerable cruelty to which men had ever been subjected. If the

bill passed, not only would a chance be afforded to the Irish Church, but strife would cease, and justice would have become in Ireland a guiding principle of the Imperial Parliament. To the question, Can Wales do anything to help on this great movement, he replied, 'You could not, in the times that are past, contend with the power of England; but now you may unite your power with the power of all men who love freedom either in England or in Ireland; and you may, by a significant addition to our Parliamentary majority, contribute to the success of that great question which is now before Parliament and the country.'

It was the question of the hour, the speaker continued. There were many efforts made to deceive the electors; the First Minister (Mr. Disraeli) was skilled in phrases, especially in phrases that were calculated to deceive. But he understood the question as well as any one. More than twenty years ago he condemned the Church of Ireland in language as forcible as any which he (Mr. Bright) could use, as an alien Church. Now, after making offers to the Church of Rome, and finding that Parliament was not in favour of them, he did his best to set up the old and evil cry of 'No Popery' at the next election. Addressing his Welsh hearers, in conclusion, Mr. Bright said: 'I hold you, I bind you to this, that you are for justice to Catholic and Protestant in Ireland, established on the voluntary principle; and I argue that you must have this opinion, and that you will support it, because you cannot sever Christianity from justice, and because you know and feel that to do justice to Ireland and to Irishmen must be to add honour and unity and strength to the Crown and to the people of this great empire.'

A vote of thanks having been passed to Mr. Bright, the hon. gentleman, in the course of some remarks acknowledging it, said that he had been speculating upon what would occur if they were defeated at the general election. If this result should take place through a cry of 'No Popery,' or 'Church in danger,' or any other cry, there would be in Ireland a far greater discontent and a far greater resolution to achieve, if it were possible, the separation of Ireland from Great Britain. Now, we have only a right to insist that the United Kingdom shall not be severed if we are willing to do full justice to the different nations of which it is composed; and therefore there is a question far more important than whether this man or that man shall be Prime Minister, or whether a particular Cabinet, shuffling and offensive as this Cabinet is, or a more honest Cabinet which may

succeed it, should govern the country.' The question of justice to Ireland was greater than this. 'I will hope, and I will speak so far as I am able, and as opportunity may be given me, in favour of the great measure which is now before Parliament, for I believe it to be essential to the unity and the strength and the harmony of the United Kingdom; and I believe that, instead—to take the language of the present Prime Minister, offensive and impudent as it was—instead of dimming the lustre of the British Crown, that it will be regarded in history as one of the most honourable events in the reign of the Queen if under her mild sceptre this United Kingdom can really be united, and Ireland made as contented and loyal as any other portion of the empire.'

During the summer of 1868 Mr. Bright became the guest of Mr. George Peabody, the distinguished American philanthropist, at Castle Connell, in Ireland. In view of the general election then pending, and the fact that the question of the disestablishment of the Irish Church was uppermost in the public mind, Mr. Bright was invited to a breakfast in the Limerick Athenæum on the 14th of July. He accepted the invitation, and delivered an address on Irish affairs. In the outset, he observed that he came before the Irish people as a simple citizen, to help in discussing a question which was exciting intense interest throughout the whole of Great Britain. He hoped he might say without pretentiousness or egotism that in his humble way he endeavoured always to speak publicly to his countrymen as a preacher of political righteousness and justice. He believed it was in this way only that the unity, true glory, and the happiness of states could be built up.

Mr. Bright observed that during the twenty years which had elapsed since he was in Limerick before, there had been a considerable change, in some respects for the better, in Ireland. When he was there previously, famine and pestilence had scarcely completed their melancholy duty. When he said duty, he regarded famine and pestilence as instruments appointed by Providence to track the ignorance, the folly, and the crimes of men. But the population had been greatly thinned by an emigration which he believed to be unexampled in modern times. It did not, however, follow that the remaining portion of the population was in a better political condition; and at that moment they met under a suspension of the British constitution as regarded Ireland and its whole population. Besides the frequent suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, there was in Ireland a great military force altogether disproportioned to

any necessity there could be for it in a country that was at once well governed, prosperous, and contented. There were some who thought that the only true and lasting remedy for Irish discontent was to be found either in the repeal of the Act of Union or in absolute independence. He hoped that all such would listen to his arguments upon this serious question.

The speaker went on to remark that he was willing and anxious to supplement the fraudful Act of Union by deeds of generosity and of justice which should really unite the three kingdoms. What he would propose, if it were possible for him to dictate the policy of the Imperial Parliament towards Ireland, would be to undo—absolutely to undo—the territorial and ecclesiastical arrangements maintained during the past two or three hundred years, though he would do all this without inflicting upon any living man the smallest act of injustice in connection with his personal interests in those territorial and ecclesiastical arrangements. As to the question of the land, he had already stated in Dublin and Birmingham, and also in the House of Commons, that his plan was to restore to the skilled farmers of Ireland, or those amongst them who saved money, a proprietary right in the soil of the country. But it should be done through their own industry, and it should be free from the slightest taint of injustice, or of spoliation upon the present proprietors of the soil.

Coming to the question of the Irish Church, Mr. Bright said he suspected that there were very few faithful and honest-minded Protestants in Ireland who would say that they approved of the ecclesiastical arrangements made for the country by England three centuries ago. There were now not more than 500,000 persons attending places of worship in connection with the Established Church in Ireland, and yet they had provided for them by the State more than £600,000 per annum. If the State were to provide in a similar manner for the other religious bodies of the population of the United Kingdom, it would absorb an annual sum of at least £36,000,000. If he had before him faithful and earnest Christian men of the Protestant Church, he would ask them whether, if they had to begin afresh, they would make such ecclesiastical arrangements as at present existed; whether these existing arrangements had been such as to justify the principle on which they had been based; and whether the State Church in Ireland had done anything to promote effectual union with England, or whether it had not rather been a bar to that union. As a political insti-

tution, the Church had had much to do with the tendency to rebellion in Ireland, and it would be impossible to find another example of such a state of things. The Church was a symbol of ancient terror, and not in any sensible degree a symbol of present peace. It stimulated the hostility of those whom it insulted against the English power. It was as much anti-English as anti-Irish, because it made it impossible for the Irish people to be in perfect harmony with England.

Mr. Bright referred to the alarms which the prospect of disestablishment was producing, and insisted upon their groundlessness, illustrating his view by the case of the abolition of the stamp and paper duties. It was predicted that the respectable journals would be ruined by the competition of inferior productions, but instead of that the new papers were quite equal to the old, and the latter had been improved. He was one of those who did not believe that the Established Church of Ireland would go to absolute ruin in the manner which many of its friends were so fearful of. The churches and parsonage houses, which had cost millions, would be left to the congregations so long as they would undertake to keep them in repair. Under a free voluntary system, the members of the Church would have power to control their organizations, free from Acts of Parliament, and thus quietly regulate their own creed and discipline. A grand bond of sympathy and union would thus be established, and instead of the ravings of frantic Orangemen, they would see the enlightened zeal of Christian men and women, acting in the spirit of a free and zealous Church.

But, whatever might be the fears indulged on this subject, he believed that the changes which were dreaded were now unavoidable. The hour appeared to have come; and the House of Commons had pronounced a sentence which the new constituencies of the United Kingdom would confirm by a still greater majority. Would not the Irish counties make one supreme and stupendous effort in that great coming crisis? It was not a time for shams, and it would add greatly to smoothing the operation of this important change, even to those who were most fearful of its consequences, if they found the almost unanimous opinion of the three kingdoms in favour of it.

In closing his address, Mr. Bright said there came to his aid, when he thought of this question, a deep and abiding faith in justice—the miracle-worker amongst men. The people of England and Scotland were preparing to tender to Ireland a great offer of justice at the general election in November. 'But the Irish people must help them with will and with heart. There

can be no great measure of this kind accomplished unless all concerned lend willing hands; and there can be no great act of national and historic reconciliation unless all the parties hitherto opposed are willing to be reconciled. We are met—your kind address has referred to it—we are met in the city of the violated treaty—violated, as I admit, incessantly during almost two centuries of time. Let us make a new treaty—not written on parchment—not bound with an oath. Its conditions should be these: justice on the part of Great Britain; forgiveness on the part of Ireland. It shall be written in the hearts of three nations; and we will pray to Him who is the common father of all peoples, and in whose hand are the destinies of all states, that He will make it last for ever and for ever inviolate.'

The forecast of the elections in which Mr. Bright indulged was amply borne out by the event. In November, Mr. Disraeli's appeal to the country was made, and the electors by an enormous majority pronounced against the Ministry, and in favour of Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church policy. We shall have something to say elsewhere concerning the elections, and Mr. Bright's acceptance of office in the Cabinet formed by Mr. Gladstone. Suffice it to state here that the Premier resigned office at once, without waiting for the assembling of the new Parliament, and Mr. Gladstone became Prime Minister.

CHAPTER IX.

DISESTABLISHMENT AND THE LAND QUESTION.

Mr. Gladstone introduces his Irish Church Bill.—Provisions of the Measure.—Debate on the Second Reading.—Powerful Speech by Mr. Bright.—Eloquent Peroration.—Great Majority for the Bill.—Debate on the Condition of Ireland.—Passage of Arms between Lord Claud Hamilton and Mr Bright.—The Church Bill passes the Commons.—Mr. Bright on the House of Lords.—Great Debate in the Upper House on the Government Measure.—Majority for Disestablishment.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham in January, 1870.—The Irish Land Question.—National Education.—Reciprocity.—Free Land.—Mr. Bright and the Land Bill of 1870.—Provisions of the Measure.—The 'Purchase Clauses' of the Act.—Mr. Bright's Plans for Land Reform.—His Irish Addresses.

BEING thus supported by the country in the great work to which he had put his hand, on the 1st of March, 1869, Mr. Gladstone introduced his bill 'to put an end to the Established Church in Ireland, to make provision in respect of the temporalities thereof, and of the Royal College of Maynooth.' The House of Commons was densely crowded in every part by those eager to listen to the Premier's exposition. He described the object of the Ministerial plan to be final legislation, so that all controversy between rival religionists should be at once put aside. To allow time for necessary arrangements, the Act would not take effect until the 1st of January, 1871. A Commission would be appointed for ten years, in which the entire property of the Irish Church would be vested, subject to life interests. Titles would terminate when the provisional period was at an end; but with respect to bishops, all peerages were to lapse immediately. The College of Maynooth would be placed on a footing precisely analogous to that of the Established Church—viz., a valuation of the annual grants at fourteen years' purchase. The gross value of the Irish Church property Mr. Gladstone estimated at £16,000,000. From this sum fell to be deducted the life interest of incumbents of all kinds, which would amount to £4,900,000; compensation to curates, £800,000; other compensations, £900,000; and Maynooth engagements, £1,100,000. Mr. Gladstone proposed with the large surplus to make provision for the blind, deaf, and dumb, and other charities and lunatic asylums, for the relief (as expressed

in the bill) of unavoidable calamity or suffering, but not so as to cancel the obligation of property for the relief of the poor.

The Premier, in an eloquent passage, called upon the House to complete the great work of peace and justice. His speech occupied rather more than three hours in its delivery, and it was the universal opinion that a more masterly or luminous statement—considering the greatness of the scheme and its complicated nature—had never been made in Parliament.

The second reading was fixed for the 18th of March, and on that date Mr. Disraeli vigorously opposed the bill, which he regarded as justifying acts of spoliation and confiscation against private as well as public property. Other able speeches against the bill were made by Dr. Ball, Sir Stafford Northcote, Mr. Spencer Walpole, and Mr. Gathorne Hardy. The Attorney-General for Ireland, Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Lowe, Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone all supported the measure; and the debating power on both sides was regarded as worthy of the House of Commons in any past time.

It was generally admitted, however, that the finest oratorical effort in the course of the debate was Mr. Bright's. He rose on the second night, and his speech all through was remarkable for its great power and earnestness. He observed in the outset that the question which the House had to decide upon was this—whether the Protestant Established Church in Ireland should cease to exist as a State institution. The matter at issue was not whether all establishments were good, but whether an establishment was good for Ireland. The question had been brought to this point by the existence of a great Irish question and a great ecclesiastical grievance. He called Lord Stanley as a witness to this. There were few men in the House better informed than the noble lord; there was no one more calm and impartial in his judgment; no speaker more measured and careful in his language: yet at a political banquet at Bristol he spoke of 'the painful, the dangerous, and to us, in appearance at least, the discreditable state of things which continues to exist in Ireland.' The noble lord concluded with the emphatic declaration, 'Ireland is the question of the hour.' He (the speaker) was not sure that since Belshazzar's feast there had been any announcement more startling, more solemn, or more calculated to disturb the merriment of a great and joyous banquet. Lord Mayo, too, had admitted that there was an ecclesiastical grievance in Ireland. The late Government being totally unable to grapple with this question—as he proved from the utterances of its various

members—Mr. Gladstone had been called in to settle it. Mr. Bright remarked that the settlement now before the House had met with the sympathy and support of the great bulk of the British people. To the question asked from the other side, What is Protestant ascendency? he replied by describing the Irish Church as a Church of conquest—the most flagrant violation of the Protestant Reformation in Europe—which had only been maintained by British power, and against which the Irish people had never ceased to protest.

Answering Mr. Disraeli's contention that the Establishment was a protector of freedom of religion and toleration, Mr. Bright excited the House to cheers and laughter by remarking that Mr. Disraeli seemed to read a different history from anybody else, or that he made his own history, and, like Voltaire, made it better without facts than with them. Regarded in every light, the Establishment had failed completely. It had made Ireland not only the most Catholic, but the most Roman of countries, and it had made Catholicism not only a religion, but a patriotism, for which multitudes of Irishmen were ready to die, and as to binding England and Ireland together, it had done that as soldiers and police had done it, and no more. The bill was put forward by the Government as the means of creating a real and solid union, and of removing Irish discontent, not only in Ireland, but across the Atlantic. Already the Irish in Australia and America were watching the proceedings of Parliament with intense interest; and though emigration would continue, the Irish would leave us no longer as enemies. The complaint which Lord North made so long ago as the first American war would at length be put an end to. By way of encouragement to the disestablished Irish Church, Mr. Bright referred to what had been accomplished since 1843 by the Free Church of Scotland, which had gone out of the Establishment absolutely naked—'not a church left them, nor a glebe house, nor a curtilage, nor a commutation, nor, I will be bound to say, with a single good wish, or a "God bless you!" on that side of the House.' Yet they had built 900 churches, 650 manses, 500 schools, three theological colleges, and two training institutions. 'Yet the learned member for the University of Dublin (Dr. Ball) had the courage to say, in the presence of many members of the Nonconformist body, that the ministers of the voluntary churches are rather of a low class—that they are not high-born. As to being high-born, I think the prophets of old were many of them graziers. The apostles were fishermen and

handicraftsmen. It was a religion, as we are told, to which "not many noble and not many mighty were called." It may be that in this age and in this country the light of the Reformation and of Christianity may be carried through the land by men of humble birth with just as much success as may attend men who were born in great mansions or palaces.'

Mr. Bright asked whether there was any reason why the Scotchmen in the north of Ireland, the Presbyterians, should be less liberal or energetic than their countrymen of the Free Church of Scotland; and he concluded with this glowing peroration:—

'It is too late to-night to go into the question of the surplus. There is one thing that I should say about it—and I say it in the hearing of my hon. and learned friend (Sir Roundell Palmer), who is understood to take a different view on this question from some on this side. John Wycliffe, as the House knows, lived five hundred years ago; he was born in the town of Richmond; and he was, perhaps, the first and greatest of the English Reformers. John Wycliffe was obliged to consider this question as to what should be done with regard to religious endowments; and he said, "If Churches make bad use of their endowments, princes are bound to take them away from them." It is not too much for us to say that if endowments are found to be mischievous, Parliament may put them to other uses. I sometimes wonder how it is that in five hundred years we make so little progress on some subjects. That was the opinion of Wycliffe in the fourteenth century, and we are now discussing the same subject in this House; and right hon. and hon. and learned gentlemen get up in this House and denounce as almost sacrilege and spoliation any attempt on the part of the Imperial Parliament to deal with the endowments of the State Church in Ireland. And as to the uses to which these endowments are put, if I were particular on the point as to the sacred nature of the endowments, I should even then be satisfied with the propositions in this bill—for, after all, I hope it is not far from Christianity to charity; and we know that the Divine Founder of our faith has left much more of the doings of a compassionate and loving heart than He has of dogma. (*Hear, hear.*) I am not able to give the chapter or the verse, the page or the column; but what has always struck me most in reading the narratives of the Gospel is how much of kindness and how much of compassion there was, and how much also there was of dealing kindly with all that were sick, all that were suffering. Do you think it will be a misappropriation of the surplus funds of this great Establishment to apply them to some objects such as those described in the bill? Do you not think that from the charitable dealing with these matters even a sweeter incense may arise than when these vast funds are applied to maintain three times the number of clergy with which they are connected? (*Hear, hear.*) We can do little, it is true. We cannot relume the extinguished lamp of reason. We cannot make the deaf to hear. We cannot make the dumb to speak. It is not given to us

> "From the thick film to purge the visual ray,
> And on the sightless eyeballs pour the day;"

but at least we can lessen the load of affliction, and we can make life more tolerable to the vast numbers who suffer. (*Loud cheers.*) Sir, when I look at this great measure—and I can assure the House I have looked at it much more than the majority of hon. and right hon. members opposite, because I

have seen it grow from line to line, and from clause to clause, and have watched its growth and its completion with a great and increasing interest,—I say when I look at this measure I look on it as tending to a more true and solid union between Ireland and Great Britain ; I see it giving tranquillity to our people—("*Oh, oh,*" *from the Opposition, followed by Ministerial cheers*),—when you have a better remedy I at least will fairly consider it—(*cheers*),—I say I see this measure giving tranquillity to our people, greater strength to the realm, and adding a new lustre and a new dignity to the Crown. (*Hear, hear.*) I dare claim for this bill the support of all thoughtful and good people within the bounds of the British Empire, and I cannot doubt that in its early and great results it will have the blessing of the Supreme ; for I believe it to be founded on those principles of justice and mercy which are the glorious attributes of His eternal reign.' (*Loud cheers.*)

This noble conclusion to a speech peculiarly distinguished for its moral fervour and earnestness greatly moved the House, and when Mr. Bright sat down the cheering was renewed again and again. The applause came from both sides of the House. The peroration was such an one as was rarely, if ever, heard within the walls of the House of Commons before; but delivered in sonorous and thrilling tones, and with due solemnity, the speaker succeeded in the great achievement of the orator, namely, that of swaying others so completely as to permeate them for a time with his own feelings and emotions.

The division took place amid much excitement. The numbers were—For the second reading, 368; against, 250; majority, 118. The majority was somewhat larger than had been anticipated. It will be seen that, including tellers, no fewer than 622 members voted in this division. The House of Commons now adjourned for a few days for the Easter recess.

After the re-assembling of the House, and during the progress of the Irish Church Bill through Committee, a debate on the general condition of Ireland was initiated by Mr. S. R. Graves, one of the members for Liverpool. In the course of this discussion, which took place on the 30th of April, Lord Claud Hamilton charged the President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Bright) with countenancing Fenianism, by a letter written in 1866, by attending one of their demonstrations in Dublin, by jesting at the scheme to surprise Chester Castle, and by sympathy with Barrett, condemned for his share in the Clerkenwell explosion. Mr. W. M. Torrens rose to order during the noble lord's speech, and was himself called to order by Mr. Disraeli; but upon the Chair being appealed to, the Speaker said that although no definite expression had been made use of which he could officially notice, he had watched, not without a feeling of pain and regret, the course of the speech of the noble lord.

As Mr. Torrens remarked, however, Mr. Bright was well able to take care of himself, and Lord Claud Hamilton's speech led to a spirited and crushing reply from the right hon. gentleman. Mr. Bright began by reminding his antagonist that the Irish question was a great question before either of them was born into the world. He called both the House and the noble lord to witness that from the first moment when he (Mr. Bright) felt called upon to speak on the Irish question, either in or out of Parliament, he described the maladies of Ireland in the same language, and called on Parliament to apply the same remedies. What he said before, he said now, that there could be no peace in the country, and no settlement, until the population were put in possession in greater numbers of the soil of their own country. They all wished for the suppression of agrarian crime in Ireland, but throughout considerable districts there was a state of opinion so depraved, or so hostile to the law, or so regardless of human life, that all the powers of the Government were baffled in endeavouring to grapple with the sore evil which afflicted the country. What was to be done? It was not a case for panic. They must ask themselves why there was in Ireland a state of things so different from any which existed elsewhere.

Recalling the language of the appeal which, as we have seen, Mr. Bright addressed to Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone in 1868, begging them to address themselves to this momentous Irish question, the speaker went on to observe that he adhered to the main argument of the letter complained of. 'I say that the condition of things in Ireland which has existed for the last two hundred years, for the last one hundred years, or even for the last fifty years, would have been utterly impossible if Ireland had been removed from the shelter and the influence and the power of Great Britain. I repeat that if Ireland were unmoored from her fastenings in the deep, and floated two thousand miles to the westward, those things which we propose to do,—which we offer to the House in this session, and which, in all probability, may be offered to the House in the next session, —would have been done by the people of Ireland themselves; and that if they had become a State of the American Republic under the constitution of that country, these things would have been done. As to the charge of his sympathy with Barrett, Mr. Bright said that he had been asked to interpose because some persons believed that the wrong man had been convicted, and as he was against capital punishment, whether for Fenianism or any other offence, he had a double reason for making an appeal

to the Home Secretary. With regard to the real question of the evening, there was a case that should induce every man on both sides of the House to apply a remedy to the great grievance of the land. The time had come when acts of constant repression in Ireland were unjust and evil, and no more acts of repression ought ever to pass the House unless attended by acts of a remedial and consoling nature.

Such, once more, was the sympathetic language of a true and tried friend of Ireland. Mr. Bright added that if his voice could reach any man in any Ribbon lodge, he would tell him that no man was a greater enemy to his country than he. For the only time in the history of the union between Great Britain and Ireland, there was a Parliament willing to do justice to Ireland—both with regard to the Church and the land question. They who lived twenty years to come, and looked back to the Irish policy of the present Government, would say they acted not only according to their light, and with the most honest intention, but with a wisdom which all that had succeeded demonstrated to be political wisdom of a high order in connection with this question.

After many lengthy discussions, the Irish Church Bill passed through Committee in the Lower House on the 7th of May—a morning sitting, protracted from two to seven o'clock, being taken for that purpose. The same evening, in the House of Lords, the Marquis of Salisbury questioned the Government as to the sense in which Mr. Bright's recent declaration on the Irish land question was to be received. Earl Granville, in reply, said Mr. Bright himself had told him, 'I made the mistake of not prefacing what I had to say by stating that, if I were left to myself, I should do so and so.' The explanation of Mr. Bright's language, added the noble Earl, was to be found in his habits as a popular speaker free from official restraint.

While frequent meetings, for and against the Government policy, were being held in the country, the Irish Church Bill was read a third time, and passed by the House of Commons on the 31st of May. On the 14th of June the debate on the second reading commenced in the House of Lords.

Just at this time, however, considerable excitement was created by the publication of the following letter, addressed by Mr. Bright to Mr. H. B. S. Thompson, Secretary to the Birmingham Liberal Association:—

'Dear Sir,—I must ask my friends to excuse me if I am unable to accept their invitation for the meeting on Monday next. The Lords are not very wise, but there is sometimes profit to the people even in their innovations. If

they should delay the passing of the Irish Church Bill for three months, they will stimulate discussion on important questions, which, but for their infatuation, might have slumbered for many years. It is possible that a good many people may ask what is the special value of a constitution which gives a majority of 100 in one House for a given policy, and a majority of 100 in another House against it. I may be asked also why the Crown, through its Ministers in the House of Commons, should be found in harmony with the nation, while the Lords are generally in direct opposition to it. Instead of doing a little childish tinkering about life peerages, it would be well if the Peers could bring themselves on a line with the opinions and necessities of our day. In harmony with the nation, they may go on for a long time; but, throwing themselves athwart its course, they may meet with accidents not pleasant for them to think of. But there are not a few good and wise men among the Peers, and we will hope their counsels may prevail. I am sure you will forgive me if I cannot come to your meeting.

'Believe me always very truly yours,

'John Bright.'

Ministers were questioned in both Houses of Parliament respecting this letter. Earl Granville in the Lords, and Mr. Gladstone in the Commons, while disclaiming any official knowledge of the contents of the document, said they were compelled to declare that it was not more severe than the language which had been applied to the bill and its promoters. Mr. Gladstone added that both himself and Mr. Bright had declined to attend public meetings on the subject of the Irish Church, not being desirous of taking any extra-Parliamentary part in the agitation upon this question. We may add that the terms of Mr. Bright's letter were most moderate in comparison with the abuse showered upon the Premier at this juncture.

On the 18th of June, after a remarkable display of eloquence on both sides, the second reading of the Irish Church Bill was carried in the House of Lords by a majority of 33. The numbers were—For the bill, 179; against, 146. The division was the largest taken in the House of Lords within living memory —325 peers having personally recorded their votes, while eighteen paired. Many eminent Conservative peers, being desirous of settling the question, supported the Government. During the subsequent progress of the bill through Committee, many important amendments were made. Some of these were accepted by the Commons, and a compromise being finally arranged with regard to others, the bill passed, and received the royal assent by commission on the 26th of July.

The members for Birmingham addressed their constituents on the 11th of January, 1870, and Mr. Bright's speech was again mainly devoted to Ireland. The occasion was one of much public interest, as it was believed that Mr. Bright would

indicate the nature of the Government policy on the land question. The right hon. gentleman began with some references to the past session. One great local measure, and one great measure of imperial importance, had been passed. By the former the large body of the ratepayers of Birmingham had been relieved from a grievance which had arisen by the abolition of the system of compounding for rates. The question of imperial importance was that of the Irish Church. The Peers had shown a great deal of wisdom in passing this Act, and had taught some people the lesson that no institution, however ancient, however dignified, however grand in its historical character, could be safe in this country if it permanently set itself against the convictions and the voice of a united people. Now that the Irish Church was disestablished, there was no Catholic grievance left, though there might be Irish grievances. There was yet one very important and awkward question, and that was the land question. But it was not an impossible problem. The land of Ireland was in the hands of very few proprietors; and the industry, the fortunes, the home, the very life of the cultivating population, were at the mercy of the owner of the land, or of the agent who had the management of his property. But there was something else: the owners were not of the same nation as the occupiers. The original grievance had been made ten times more bitter than it would otherwise have been by the folly of the proprietary class, working as they did through a corrupt Parliament in Ireland, and also through the governing power in Great Britain.

At last, continued Mr. Bright, Parliament was called on, not merely to give right and justice to the tenants, but to save the interests and protect the property of the proprietors. He did not know whether, if he were an Irishman, he should be more anxious for legislation as a tenant or as a landlord. But it was absolutely necessary to put an end to the reign of discord in Ireland. The land question was one of the greatest and most difficult that had ever been considered by an Administration or submitted to Parliament. But it was not a question for class and party conflict—'it was one for conscientious patriotism, a question which every man should consider, because the prosperity, the peace, and the unity of the empire depended upon its wise solution.' He believed now that great results were about to follow from legislation for Ireland.

'What has been done already? In conjunction with her representatives we have already given to Ireland free churches and free schools, and I hope before long that we shall give them free land and a free vote. Ireland, as

you know, is not the most wealthy island in the world, but we can buy from her all she wishes to sell at a higher price than any other nation can give, and we can sell to her all she wishes to buy at a lower price than any other nation. We may fail, but I believe that we shall not fail. (*Cheers.*) Good and honest efforts generally succeed. We propose, then, a new conquest of Ireland, without confiscation and without blood—with only the holy weapon of a frank and generous justice, which is everywhere potent to bring together nations which have been long alienated by oppression or neglect. (*Loud cheers.*) From such a new policy we hope for great changes in Ireland. We do not expect that Ireland is to be made a paradise, but that it will be greatly altered for the better. It may seem like the language of exaggeration when I quote the lines of Pope in one of the most exquisite poems in our language:

> "Then crime shall cease, and ancient fraud shall fail,
> Returning Justice lift aloft her scale;
> Peace o'er the realm her olive wand extend,
> And white-robed Innocence from Heaven descend."

(*Loud cheers.*) I say that this may appear like the language of exaggeration; but if we are able to suppress conspiracy, if we are able to banish agrarian crime—(*cheers*)—if we can unbar the prison doors—(*cheers*)—if we can reduce all excess of military force, if we can make Ireland as tranquil as England and Scotland now are—(*cheers*)—then, at least, I think we may have done something to justify the wisdom and the statesmanship of our time.' (*Loud cheers.*)

Dealing next with the question of education, with regard to which Birmingham had recently taken its right position and done itself so much honour, Mr. Bright said he was glad to think that the religious difficulty was diminishing in magnitude. Every child in every school might be taught the elementary parts of religion; and the denominational system had acquired strength because it endeavoured to do that which everybody saw must necessarily be done. He was persuaded that as this topic was more fully discussed there would come up a demand for national education from all the people, and then the religious question would gradually become smaller and smaller, while they would be able to offer to all the children of the country a sound elememtary education.

Turning then to the subject of the commercial treaty with France, Mr. Bright warned his hearers against the new 'reciprocity' movement, which was merely Protection under another name. He advised working men not to be deceived by interested agitators, and recommended them to press for such a retrenchment in taxation as would not only give to all who heard him a free breakfast-table, but free trade in land as well. This question of free land, he said, in conclusion, was coming on, and was inevitable:

'I believe that an alteration of the land laws of England, such as might be made without lessening by sixpence the value of any man's property, would

do much to arrest that tide of pauperism which is constantly flowing from the agricultural counties into our great centres of industry. But when I have mentioned these things, I am obliged to confess that they are not all—that something more is wanted, although the law will not effect it, and although its foundation lies beyond the bounds of law. It is that which every man should consider: I have considered it often and often, with great seriousness and with much anxiety, during the thirty years that I have been in the habit of discussing public questions. No Government, no Administration, no laws, no amount of industry or commerce, no extent of freedom, can give prosperity and solid comfort to the homes of the people unless there be in those homes economy, temperance, and the practice of virtue. That which I am preaching is needful for all, but it is specially needful—most needful in some respects—for those whose possessions are the least abundant and the least secure. If we could subtract from the ignorance, the poverty, the suffering, the sickness, and the crime which are caused by one single but most prevalent bad habit or vice—the drinking heedlessly of that which destroys body and mind, and home and family—do we not all feel that this country would be so changed, and so changed for the better, that it would be almost impossible for us to know it again? Let me then, in conclusion, say what is upon my heart to say, what I know to be true, what I have felt every hour of my life when I have been discussing anything which affects the condition of the working classes. It is by the union of a wise Government with a virtuous people, and not otherwise, that we may hope to make some steps towards that blessed time when there shall be no longer complaining in our streets, when our garners shall be full, affording all manner of store.'

At a public breakfast given to him on the day following the delivery of this speech, Mr. Bright discussed the question of working-men candidates, and said he did not approve of such candidates as representatives of the working classes only. He approved of good men of any class being returned to Parliament, if they were capable of representing all classes; but he wished the idea of classes to be got rid of, and desired rather national representation. This expression of opinion led to a controversy with the supporters of Mr. George Odger, who was then contesting the borough of Southwark.

In the debates on Mr. Gladstone's Irish Land Bill of 1870—a further scheme for the pacification of Ireland in which he had taken a deep and special interest—Mr. Bright was able to take no part. On the very eve of the meeting of Parliament, finding he was suffering greatly from mental exhaustion, the right hon. gentleman wrote as follows to Mr. Gladstone: 'I cannot tell you how much I am disappointed at being absent from the meeting of Parliament, but I have distinct warnings of an attack of something like that from which I suffered fourteen years ago, and I dare not disregard them. I am quite unable to work, and must leave London for a time. I regret deeply that I cannot be at your side to vote and plead for the Irish Land Bill. I think it a wise, just, and comprehensive measure;

and I hope the moderation and patriotism of Parliament will enable it soon to become law.'

The Land Bill was introduced by Mr. Gladstone on the 15th of February. In a speech of three hours' duration he minutely discussed the several questions of loans to occupiers and landlords, the judicial machinery for administering the Act, the different classes of holdings, damages for eviction, improvements, and leases. The question, 'What is an improvement?' had given the Government much trouble, and the definition the author of the bill gave was that it must be something which should add to the letting value of the land, and must be suitable to the holding. The bill would reverse the present presumption of law, and would presume all improvements to be the property of the tenant, and it would be for the landlord to prove the contrary. Retrospective improvements would be included, but only so far back as twenty years, except in the case of permanent buildings and reclamations of lands. As to holdings under lease, the Premier said any owner might exempt his lands from the custom, always excepting the Ulster custom, which would be legalized, and from the scale of damages, by giving to his tenants a lease for thirty-one years, provided that the lease were approved by the Court, and gave the tenant at the close of it a right to compensation for manures, permanent buildings, and reclamation of land. The bill, after lengthy discussions, passed through both Houses—several amendments by the Lords being accepted by the Commons; and it received the royal assent on the 1st of August.

With regard to this important measure, it may be stated that the 'Purchase clauses' of the Act were, as is well known, proposed by Mr. Bright, and urged by him upon the Cabinet. They met with little earnest support, however, and, it is believed, in one quarter with strong opposition. The Irish Executive had their scheme in the bill which became a law, and the Cabinet were disposed to be content with their suggestions; and the utmost which was accepted from Mr. Bright were the incomplete clauses whose operation has been so partial and limited.

The plan then proposed by Mr. Bright was mainly that adopted in the later bill of the session of 1881. As we have remarked, shortly before the commencement of the session of 1870 Mr. Bright was in failing health, and was compelled to absent himself from Parliament before the bill was brought forward. He was consequently unable to insist upon and defend his clauses, as he might, and doubtless would, under other cir-

cumstances have ably and effectively done. Mr. Gladstone is understood to have regarded the plan with favour, but opinion seemed not to have ripened sufficiently to enable the Government to deal more boldly with the question. It is the opinion of many well-informed persons in Ireland that if the plan accepted in 1881 with almost unanimous consent had been adopted in the bill of 1870, the country might have been spared the sufferings and the danger of the agitation through which Ireland has passed since Mr. Gladstone's first Land Bill became a law.

The Irish addresses delivered by Mr. Bright during the period we have just traced—that is, from 1866 to 1870—demonstrate not only his love of justice, and his deep desire to secure a righteous treatment for Ireland, but a capacity for a higher order of statesmanship. In a very large degree, as we have before observed, it was his advocacy that hastened those great remedial measures passed for the benefit of Ireland and the Irish people which shed such lustre upon Mr. Gladstone's first Administration.

CHAPTER X.

THE ELECTION OF 1868.—MR. BRIGHT ACCEPTS OFFICE.—SECOND ILLNESS AND RESIGNATION, ETC.

The General Election of 1868.—Mr. Bright's Address to his Constituents.—His Speech in the Town Hall.—Contrast between Toryism and Liberalism.—Mr. Bright on the Minority Clause.—Address to the Gun-makers.—The enormous Public Expenditure,—Policy and Opinions of the Tory Candidates.—National Education.—Scene at the Birmingham Nomination.—Result of the Poll. Great Liberal Triumph.—Liberal Victory throughout the Country.—Resignation of Mr. Disraeli.—Mr. Gladstone becomes Prime Minister.—He offers a Seat in the Cabinet to Mr. Bright.—It is ultimately accepted.—The Gladstone Ministry.—Mr. Bright's Re-election.—Address to his Constituents.—Remarks on his Acceptance of Office.—President of the Board of Trade.—Mr. Bright on Nova Scotia and the Confederation Scheme.—On Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister.—Sir T. Chambers's Bill of 1869.—Banquet at the Trinity House.—Speech by Mr. Bright.—Amnesty to the Fenian Prisoners in 1870.—Mr. Bright's Second Illness.—He resigns Office.—The Press on the Resignation.—Mr. Bright condemns Home Rule.—Congratulatory Address from the Workmen of London.—Mr. Bright on Republicanism.—Presentation from the Potteries.—Review of Public Questions.—Reconstruction of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet.—Mr. Bright accepts office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.—Great Meeting at Birmingham.—Stirring Scene.—Important Speech by Mr. Bright.—Free Land.—The Waning Popularity of the Government.—Mr. Gladstone's Manifesto to the Electors of Greenwich.—Dissolution of Parliament.—The Election for Birmingham.—The old Members returned.—Speech by Mr. Bright.—Results of the General Election.—Mr. Disraeli accedes to office as Premier.

After Mr. Disraeli's emphatic defeat on Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church Resolutions in the session of 1868, the Premier resolved on appealing to the country. The elections, however, which were the first held under the new Reform Act, did not take place until the following November.

But immediately after the prorogation of Parliament on the 31st of July, preparations were made in many of the constituencies in view of the approaching contest. The struggle had a double significance. Mr. Disraeli was naturally anxious that the constituencies, which had been enlarged by the Act of 1867, should pronounce in favour of his Government; while the Liberal party throughout the country was equally anxious for a striking and unmistakable endorsement of Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church policy.

Mr. Bright issued his address to his constituents at Birmingham on the 22nd of August. On the subject of the ballot he remarked: 'I regard the question of the ballot as of first importance. Whether I look to the excessive cost of elections, or to the tumult which so often attends them, or to the unjust and cruel pressure which is so frequently brought to bear upon the less independent class of voters, I am persuaded that the true interest of the public and of freedom will be served by the adoption of the system of secret and free voting. It is in practice, and is highly valued, in almost every other country having representative institutions; and I regard it as absolutely necessary to a real representation of the United Kingdom.' Upon the great topic of the hour he observed: 'The foremost question for the new Parliament will be our treatment of Ireland. You know my views on the Irish Church Establishment and on the land question. In dealing with the Irish Establishment we are not promoting the spread of the Roman Catholic, or damaging the influence of the Protestant religion. We do not touch religion at all. We deal only with the political institution, which has wholly failed to secure any good object, and which has succeeded only in weakening the loyalty and offending the sense of justice of the great majority of the Irish people. Our opponents speak of their zeal for Protestantism and their loyalty to the constitution. I prefer a Protestantism which is in alliance with Christian kindness and with justice, and my loyalty to the constitution leads me to wish for the hearty union of the three kingdoms in allegiance to the Crown. I believe that Christianity and the constitution will be alike strengthened in these islands by the removal of the Irish Church Establishment.'

By the Reform Act, Birmingham was one of those towns to which a third member was given; and the Liberals, being resolved, if possible, upon defeating the minority clause, now brought forward three candidates, namely, Mr. Bright and Mr. George Dixon, the old members, and Mr. P. H. Muntz. They were opposed by two Conservatives, Mr. Sampson Lloyd and Dr. Sebastian Evans, who, knowing the extremely Liberal character of the Birmingham constituency, endeavoured to infuse into their Conservatism as popular a tone as possible.

On the 26th of October, Mr. Bright appeared before a crowded meeting of the electors, held in the Town Hall, Mr. J. S. Wright presiding. The hon. gentleman spoke for more than an hour, but the *Birmingham Post* observed that 'the more than usual earnestness and rapidity of speech with which

he commenced his discourse led to the inevitable discomfiture of his voice, which, under the strain it was thus subjected to, betrayed its inherent weakness long before the close of his address. Although to all appearance in good health, the change which the past few months had effected in his appearance was strikingly evident to all. Time had marked his long years of service with an unsparing hand; and his hair, which when he last stood in the Town Hall was of an iron-gray, had now turned to silver.

Mr. Bright's speech on this occasion consisted of a retrospect, a contrast, and an appeal. He reminded his listeners that exactly ten years had elapsed since he was entitled to address the electors of Birmingham as one of their representatives. Since that time, he said, referring to the subject of reform, they had done much to dethrone a class and to raise a nation to power. In 1858 there were seven thousand electors in all the vast population of Birmingham; but in the election impending no fewer than forty thousand might vote. 'At this moment,' he continued, 'there are two parties, and there are two systems of government, and of administration, and of legislation, who are appealing to you for your suffrage—one which in our younger days always called itself the Tory party, but latterly, with an ingenuity that would almost baffle a detective—(*laughter and cheers*)—has taken several other names. Sometimes it calls itself Conservative; and I am told that in Birmingham even that is refined down to Liberal-Conservatism—(*laughter*)—and in some other places, and perhaps here on some occasions, it calls itself Constitutionalism. (*Great laughter.*) The great constitutional measure which has just been passed was a measure of our recommendation—(*cheers*)—and the measure that we have carried; and the measure that was not only not carried, but was not originated, and was always opposed, by those who now triumphantly appeal to you under the character of friends of the constitution. The other party calls itself Liberal; and with many shortcomings, and with many errors in its history, it has been, and may be now, truly called the Liberal party.' (*Cheers.*)

The hon. gentleman went on to say that in ancient times, when any great public emergency arose, it was common for the people to consult the oracles; and he should like his hearers to consult the past and recent history of this country to discover the true character of the two parties who were appealing to them. Suppose they were then engaged in the election going forward in the United States, would they support a man who

had never stepped forward to uphold the hand of President Lincoln in his determination to maintain the unity of a great nation, and to abolish slavery? What was reasonable then in England? He would ask them about the past—not the remote past—because from 1760 to 1828 was a period of utter political darkness in this country. But in 1828 no Dissenter in England could hold any civil or military office in the State. Many did hold these offices contrary to law, but every year a bill of indemnity was passed to excuse them for having broken the law. There were six millions of Roman Catholics in the kingdom, and not one of them was permitted to sit in the House of Commons. Where did the members of Parliament come from? He had lately been spending some days in the county of Cornwall, with beautiful coast scenery, and with an industrious, a frugal, an intelligent, and a noble-minded population; but the rotten boroughs of that county formerly returned forty-four members.

At the time of which he was speaking, too, of municipal government there was scarcely anything in England, while in the colonies we had 800,000 negroes in a state apparently of hopeless bondage. Then there were monopolies in corn, sugar, and many other things. In canvassing a working man, he had told him that since the repeal of the Corn Laws there had come into this country more than five hundred millions' worth of food which those laws were intended to keep out. A loaf had been given where otherwise it could not have been given, and there was not an agricultural labourer in England whose wages had not been increased, whose comforts had not been made more secure, by the abolition of the law which was supposed to give special protection to their interest. Then there was the abolition of the tax upon the newspaper press, respecting which great change his old friend Mr. Milner Gibson, of all men, deserved the honour and the credit; and this change could not be reckoned second to any. England had undergone a revolution in the past forty years. How were those changes made, and who made them? Public opinion had never been created, or stimulated, or guided—it had sometimes been obeyed—by the Tory party.

After referring to the French Treaty, slavery emancipation, the repeal of the paper duty, reform, and the disestablishment of the Irish Church—as matters all supported by the Liberal party, Mr. Bright thus concluded his stirring address:—

'We must have done with everything that is intended solely to please and to elevate one class as against another class. (*Hear, hear.*) We must be as one people, and we must have one law and one measure of justice, and one great equality in all our institutions. (*Cheers.*) And if you intend to have this, you

must give no more support to the Tory party—(*cheers*)—now, when you have votes, than you did by your voices when you had no votes. If it had not been for that party, your fathers and your grandfathers would have had a vote, which is only now conceded to you. (*Hear, hear.*) What would you think of the liberated negroes of the Southern States coming forward to vote for any of the members of the Copperhead faction—(*laughter*)—that would have kept him in perpetual bondage? Metaphorically, may I not say that your chains are but just dropping off? They now lie at your feet. (*Applause.*) Your limbs at this very moment are sore with their chafing. The sound of their clanking has not left your ears, and you are impudently and audaciously asked to vote for a man and a party who for a hundred years past have riveted those chains upon you. (*Prolonged cheering.*) Ten years ago I appealed to you from this place. I appealed to you on behalf of the franchise, which I said you had a right to, and which must be shortly conceded to you. I did not appeal in vain. (*Hear, hear, and applause.*) I reminded you then of what your fathers had done, not then thirty years ago, when they had shaken the fabric of privilege to its base—I appeal to you now. Ever since I have been permitted to speak in these open councils of my countrymen I have pleaded for their rights—for their political rights. You have now, to a large extent, obtained those rights. I plead with you once more that you should regard those rights as a sacred trust—(*cheers*)—in the eyes of your countrymen, and in the eye of Heaven itself, and that you should use those rights only as an instrument of good—that you should seriously weigh the claims of all those who seek your suffrages, and that you should so vote that you may expect to influence in the Imperial Parliament the legislation of your country, so that you may advance the happiness of all the people in all its families, and the grandeur and the security of this nation.' (*Loud applause.*)

On the 30th, Mr. Bright delivered another stirring speech to an enthusiastic audience which crowded the Town Hall in every part. He spoke with more action and vigour than on the previous occasion. The subject of the minority clause roused the hon. member's eloquence to its highest pitch, and, apart from its other merits, the whole address was a fine piece of oratorical display. Mr. Jaffray moved the following resolution: 'That with the view of defeating the operation of the minority clause, and of rendering certain the return of the three Liberal candidates, Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz, this meeting is of opinion that the plan of voting proposed by the Liberal Association should receive the unanimous support of the Liberal electors.' By this plan, which originated with a well-known Birmingham Liberal, Mr. Harris, the borough was mapped out into various districts, and the electors in each district were told which candidates they were to vote for, with the view of ensuring the safe return of the whole three. The resolution was seconded by the Rev. Charles Vince, carried without a single dissentient.

Mr. Bright then addressed the meeting. Referring first to the Reform Act of the previous session, he showed that out of sixty-one clauses left in it when the bill passed, there were only four complete and perfect clauses as the Government offered

them to the House. Sixteen clauses were borrowed from Mr. Gladstone's bill of 1866. He then referred at length to the ratepaying clauses of the Act, which had caused so much suffering and irritation in Birmingham. The Government were responsible for what had taken place in this matter. Without the abolition of compounding, in the then attitude of the Government, one of two things must have happened—either the bill must have been wholly lost for the session, or the great bulk of the householders, below £10—476,000 of them—must have remained without enfranchisement. He (Mr. Bright) had done all he could to inform public opinion on this question, and when any rational and just remedy was proposed to the House of Commons he hoped to be there to support it.

Passing then to consider the operation of the minority clause, Mr. Bright observed that the right of the electors at the nomination to hold up their hands for their candidates remained as it was before the Act passed. Now when a poll was demanded, it was granted to prove whether the show of hands did really express the opinions of the constituency. But how could the electors, being only allowed to vote for two candidates at the poll, correct or in any way prove the propriety and the truth of the demonstration at the hustings? Was it not quite clear that our ancient constitution was entirely departed from, and that the innovation which was passed last year was directly in the teeth of all the principles in this matter which had governed the electors for six hundred years past? If the principle were a good one, why not have it all over the constituencies? If they gave a seat to the minority in those places having only two seats, the borough was neutralized, and politically might just as well be extinct. Mr. Bright next demonstrated the fallacy of the cumulative vote as proposed by Mr. Lowe, showing that if a Tory candidate in Birmingham had only ten thousand supporters out of forty thousand, he might even come in at the head of the poll, if his supporters gave him all their three votes, and the Liberals distributed theirs amongst the various Liberal candidates. This was rejected, but the House of Lords on the motion of Lord Cairns, introduced the odious clause now complained of, and the Government had carried it in the Commons by the united vote of the Conservatives, and some forty or fifty men from the Liberal side.

Their Conservative opponents, said Mr. Bright, were in favour of this clause, but if one of them by any possibility had a chance of creeping in through it, he could only succeed by crippling and emasculating one of the greatest and one of the

foremost of the constituencies in the empire. Every man now came to the election with one hand tied behind his back. Remarking that for himself he would not sit for any place where he had been returned by this detestable trick or wanton innovation, he thus closed his speech:—

'Do not let us have any new-fangled ideas. The fancy franchises we kicked to the winds; the minority clause, which ought to have come, not from the honest representatives of the people, but from Bedlam, or a region like that, should have the same treatment. (*Cheers.*) If you men of Birmingham want to know what freedom is, look back to the lives and histories of your forefathers. They knew how to lay foundations broad and deep; it is for you to protect those foundations, and to build wisely upon them. (*Cheers.*) There is not one of the great fathers of English freedom who lived two centuries ago, who, if he had been in the House of Commons, would not have said "No" as emphatically as I did to this odious clause. (*Cheers.*) And now, seeing that in this hall, and in this constituency, we have no power to-night to put an end to this clause or to repeal it—seeing that it must be tolerated as it best may until the power that made it shall again unmake it, let us not forget that we have a duty in regard to it. Every Liberal throughout the United Kingdom is asking, "What is Birmingham going to do with the minority clause?" If every part of the sea is salt, if every district and every ward of the constituency in Birmingham is Liberal, do you, by united action, by hand and voice, and heart and vote, tell the House of Commons and the whole country that there shall never go with your consent, in spite of all the machinations of these dreamers and schemers of minority representation, that no member or representative of the Tory party shall enter the House of Commons as the representative of this borough. (*Loud cheers, and cries of "Never!"*) And the more this is known throughout the country, the more this is felt in the House of Commons, the more certainly you may take this comfort to your hearts, that by this election—great and transcendent triumph as we believe it will be—you will put an end shortly to this odious infringement of your liberties, and add one other great and permanent security to English freedom.'

At the close of this peroration the vast auditory, whose applause had constantly broken forth during the hon. member's speech, rose *en masse* to demonstrate their warm appreciation of the address.

Parliament was dissolved on the 11th of November, and writs were issued for a new one, returnable on the 11th of December. In Birmingham the Liberals had a great triumph, defeating the minority clause and returning all their candidates by large majorities. The clause was also defeated at Glasgow, but in Leeds and Manchester the Conservatives secured the third seat. The nomination at Birmingham was fixed for the 16th of November, and for some days before this Mr. Bright and his colleagues were indefatigable in addressing meetings of the electors in various parts of the town.

On the 10th they addressed a meeting of the gun trade. This large and important trade had been harassed by the action of the Government in establishing manufactories at Enfield

and elsewhere. In common with others, they condemned the policy of the Government in undertaking such commercial or industrial occupations as could only be carried out adequately and safely by private enterprise. Mr. Bright in his speech said that those who had convened the meeting had no intention whatever of urging upon their present or future representatives any course in regard to any particular trade or industry which should not be consistent with the true policy of Government and the true interests of all portions of the people. Had it been otherwise, he could be no advocate of such a trade or industry. The hon. gentleman went on to say that he had always been of opinion it was a great mistake for the Government to undertake the character of manufacturers; he believed it was so with regard to the building of ships, the manufacture of clothing for the army, and in the manufacturing of guns. He completely endorsed the opinion of his lamented friend Mr. Cobden, that the Government ought not to be allowed to manufacture for itself any article which could be obtained from private producers in a competitive market.

Mr. Bright then inveighed against the excessive public expenditure. Notwithstanding the enormous growth of the military expenditure, the services were always asking for more. The complaint against Oliver Twist was that he asked for more, but then Oliver was badly used, and this was not the case with those who were always working on the Government. An entirely new system was wanted. The formation of the Estimates should no longer be left to the Admiralty, the War Office, or the Cabinet; but there ought to be an honestly chosen committee of the House of Commons. For himself, he had done all he could to procure a reduction in the Estimates, but there was no greater delusion imaginable than that any single member of Parliament could make any sensible difference in the public expenditure. Mr. Joseph Hume fought the Estimates for forty years, and yet they always grew. The £70,000,000 per annum for the past ten years had been drawn chiefly from the industrial portion of the population. The pressure of taxes was always felt most heavily by the poorest of the people. There was no jeopardy to a monarchy so great as that arising from a constantly growing debt and a constantly extravagant expenditure. Referring to the speeches of his opponents (Mr. Lloyd and Dr. Evans), Mr. Bright said, amid loud laughter, that he was too busy to dwell much upon works of fiction. The speeches of Mr. Lloyd were what he should call dull fiction, and the speeches of his colleague, though not less fiction, were cer-

tainly of a rather more sparkling and sensational character. He had not got much out of their speeches, for the reporters had given more prominence to the speech of their chairman, Mr. Councillor Lowe. Mr. Lowe said, 'Never go back from the bulwarks of your civil and religious liberties,' and that, he presumed, meant the Established Church of Ireland. He (Mr. Bright) did not believe that the Established Church was ever the bulwark of our civil or religious liberties either in England or Ireland, and it was a remarkable fact that the constant stream of perverts to the Church of Rome came, not from the Nonconformists, but from the Established Church. The Church of England was very far from being a bulwark against the Church of Rome.

As to the charge made against him that he was an opponent of the Factory Act, Mr. Bright replied that he went into the same lobby on this question with Lord Derby and Lord Chelmsford (then in the Commons), General Peel, Sir J. Pakington, and other leaders of the Conservative party. Perhaps he was in bad company, but certainly the supporters of those Conservative leaders ought now to admit that, if they had nothing since then to lay to his charge, his character would at least bear comparison with the eminent chiefs of their own party. As to short time, there was no man in England who had ever been more in favour of short time work than he had. His opponents were in a mean and pitiable condition. They were seeking to enter Parliament, not by the open door of the constitution of England, but to wriggle in by a crevice. Down in Birmingham they were Liberal-Conservatives, but on the way to Westminster there would be an entire transformation, and at the House of Commons the Liberal Conservative would be found sitting among the real old true-blue Tories. Referring to the approaching struggle, Mr. Bright said: 'Let me beg of you to consider the gravity of the occasion, the greatness of the principles for which we contend, the grandeur of the triumphs that we have already obtained, and the glories of the future to which your country may look forward; and let the man who speaks for Birmingham in the House of Commons be one who shall speak for those great principles which are essential in every country for the happiness of its whole people.'

In a second speech made in the Deritend Ward, Mr. Bright said he had read the inflated address of the Prime Minister (Mr. Disraeli); he had read scores of columns of talk by other gentlemen; but he had not found in any one paragraph any

distinct proposition of any policy that was intended to change the condition of things in Ireland. He enforced the necessity for the ballot, reviewed briefly the political reforms recently achieved, and with regard to his opponents, Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Evans, remarked, amid cheers and laughter, that the utmost ambition of each was to become the inferior member for Birmingham. Mr. Bright concluded by defending Mr. Gladstone from the slanders and calumnies which just at this time were widely and persistently circulated against him; and he treated with contempt the aspersions which had been made upon himself.

Past progress, and the possibility of a free breakfast-table and other reforms, were the chief points of another speech made by the hon. gentleman at Saltley. In yet another speech, delivered at Holder's Concert Hall, Coleshill Street, Mr. Bright spoke upon the question of national education. He said he had long been the advocate of Parliamentary Reform, in order that a Parliament should be framed chiefly for this great purpose—that they might devise a policy which should lay hold of the vast mass of ignorance in the country, to raise the people many degrees in the social scale, and to remove that which was a discredit and a shame to our civilization and to our religion. 'I am weary, as I travel through the country, of looking upon those vast borough gaols and county gaols—those vast fabrics that rise up, which, if you ask their names, are poor-houses or lunatic asylums. I say that throughout the length and breadth of a great intelligent country like this, we ought to have buildings which shall strike the eye of every traveller through the country—of every foreigner who visits it; buildings which shall be consecrated to the greatest and the noblest of all purposes—that of instructing the great mass of the people, and raising them up to the position to which they have a right to aspire, and which God intends them to occupy.' They were now fighting no mean battle. It was a battle of light as against darkness; it was a battle of justice against selfishness; it was a battle of instruction and intelligence against prejudice and against wrong.

The nomination took place on the 16th of November, the hustings being erected on a large space of ground behind the Town Hall. An immense crowd, computed at thirty thousand persons, was present. Mr. J. S. Wright, in coming forward to nominate Mr. Bright, said: 'I have had entrusted to me the honourable duty of nominating our long-tried and faithful friend, John Bright, as a fit and proper person to represent this

borough in the ensuing Parliament—a Parliament that will more completely represent you, the commons, the people of England, than any one that has assembled since the Norman Conquest—a Parliament formed by a power which mainly owes its force, if not its creation, to the genius and untiring energy of John Bright. His life is known, his acts are written on the imperishable record of our country's history.' Mr. Raffles seconded the nomination. Mr. George Dixon was proposed and seconded by Mr. Lampard and Mr. Jaffray respectively; Mr. P. H. Muntz by Ald. Ryland and Mr. Monk, a working man; Mr. S. S. Lloyd (the first Conservative candidate) by Mr. J. D. Goodman and Mr. Lowe; and Dr. Sebastian Evans by Mr. Hands and Mr. Bentley. Each candidate spoke very briefly, merely expressing his thanks.

Mr. Bright was received with one vast shout of applause from the whole assembly. While he was speaking, an enormous loaf was displayed from a distant window as an acknowledgment of his services in the cause of Free Trade. When Mr. Lloyd stood forward, a perfect storm of yells and groans arose on all sides. The large loaf, which had been waved at the end of a stick when Mr. Bright spoke, was now exchanged for a loaf of the most diminutive proportions, and simultaneously a hoisted voter displayed a black flag, emblematic of the death of the hopes of the Conservative candidates. The show of hands was overwhelmingly in favour of the Liberal candidates, that for Mr. Bright surpassingly so; as a spectator remarked, the moving forest of hands seemed in effect as though a wind had passed over a field of corn, waxing and whitening the vast surface.

A poll was demanded, which was ordered to be taken on the following day. The Conservatives sustained a crushing defeat, which was rendered all the worse in consequence of their having published a preliminary statement to the effect that the result of their canvass gave a majority of 2,273 for Mr. Lloyd over Mr. Bright. At the declaration of the poll, the Mayor read out the numbers as follows: Dixon, 15,098; Muntz, 14,614; Bright, 14,601; Lloyd, 8,700; and Evans, 7,061. A plan had been suggested by which Mr. Bright could have been returned at the head of the poll, but the hon. member himself would not allow the existing arrangement to be disturbed. He desired that the scheme laid down by the Committee should be adhered to in its integrity. After the announcement of the figures, the three members and the defeated candidates briefly addressed the crowd surrounding the hustings. The pleasant

amenities of an election contest were not forgotten, and as soon as the figures became known, cards with black borders were distributed, inscribed as follows: 'Sacred to the memory of Sampson S. Lloyd and Sebastian Evans, LL.D,, who departed their political life on Tuesday, November 17, 1868, having fallen victims to that dread disease, Public Opinion, accelerated by the action of the Vote-as-you-are-told Committee. They were interred at the hustings, Town Hall, November 18, amid the woeful lamentations of their chapfallen supporters.'

The elections generally throughout the country resulted in the enormous Liberal majority of 115, the members returned being classed as follows: Liberals, 387; Conservatives, 272. But the Liberal majority was still further slightly enhanced by certain subsequent elections. The Liberals, however, sustained some severe individual losses. Mr. Gladstone, in conjunction with Mr. Grenfell, decided to contest South-West Lancashire against Mr. Cross and Mr. Turner; but although the polling was close, the Conservatives were returned. Fortunately, Mr. Gladstone had already been elected for Greenwich, which place he now sat for. In the northern division of Lancashire, the Marquis of Hartington, who had been a member of Lord Russell's Cabinet, was defeated by Col. Stanley; and in Westminster, Mr. John Stuart Mill was defeated by Mr. W. H. Smith. Amongst well-known members of both political parties who failed to secure seats at this election were Mr. Roebuck, Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Bernal Osborne, Lord Amberley, Mr. Horsman, Sir J. Karslake, Sir R. Baggallay, Mr. Huddleston, Q. C., and the Lord-Advocate for Scotland,

On the 1st of December, Ministers, being in a hopeless minority, decided to tender their resignations at once, without waiting for a formal verdict to be delivered against them by the new Parliament. This unusual step was made known and defended in a circular addressed by Mr Disraeli to the supporters of the Government in both Houses. This decision obviated the necessity of a formal debate in Parliament, with the inevitable result of a defeat of the Ministry by a large majority. It also gave time to their successors to consider their legislative plans for the ensuing session.

Mr. Gladstone, whose Irish Church policy had resulted in the overthrow of the Conservative Government, was the only possible statesman to accede to office at this crisis, and he accordingly, on the 5th of December, received Her Majesty's commands to form a Ministry. Mr. Bright, who had a strong and natural repugnance to official life, at first declined to ac-

cept the seat in the Cabinet offered to him by Mr. Gladstone. In answering his objections, Mr. Gladstone brought forward arguments with the view of proving that it was Mr. Bright's duty to take an active part in the government of the country. In the course of this friendly discussion, which was very protracted, Mr. Bright expressed his belief that he could render more efficient service to Mr. Gladstone's Government as an independent supporter than as a member of the Cabinet. Replying with a lengthy review of Mr. Bright's career, Mr. Gladstone pointed out that many of the principles which he had espoused had come to be recognized as the true and legitimate policy of the Government; that an opportunity was now afforded to give effect to his views as a member of the Government; and that it was his duty not to shrink from the responsibility which the acceptance of office would entail upon him. In the end Mr. Gladstone prevailed. Mr. Bright accepted the office of President of the Board of Trade, and was sworn in a member of the Privy Council.

In addition to the Premier and Mr. Bright, Mr. Gladstone's first Cabinet was composed of the following members:—Lord Chancellor, Lord Hatherley; Lord President of the Council, Earl de Grey and Ripon; Lord Privy Seal, Earl of Kimberley; Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lowe; Home Secretary, Mr. Bruce; Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Earl of Clarendon; Secretary for the Colonies, Earl Granville; Secretary at War, Mr. Cardwell; Secretary for India, the Duke of Argyll; Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Chichester Fortescue; First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Childers; Postmaster-General, Lord Hartington; and President of the Poor Law Board, Mr. Goschen.

On the 21st of December, Mr. Bright appeared before his constituents for re-election. He began his address by observing that it was a dream he had in his youth that as he advanced in life he should find himself more at liberty and less under the control of circumstances or of the opinion of others. He found that that was altogether a dream, and that the longer he lived the less he seemed to be his own master. The proof of this was that he was again before his constituents, and in a new character. The late Government, which was built upon the fraud of the session of 1866, had vanished, and Mr. Gladstone had been called to office by the willing voice of the Queen, and by the approbation of a vast majority of the people in the United Kingdom. Mr. Bright then gave the following account of the circumstances attending his own accession to office:—

'Mr. Gladstone, soon after he proceeded to the formation of his Administration, asked me to join him in the Government. (*Cheers.*) I have reason to know that he made that proposition with the cordial and gracious acquiescence of Her Majesty the Queen. (*Renewed cheering.*) As you know, I had very strong grounds for refusing to change my seat and place in the House of Commons. The arguments which were used to induce me to do so were based entirely upon what was considered best for the interests of the great Liberal party and for the public service. (*Applause.*) I was obliged to admit that, on looking at those arguments from such a point of view, they were not easily to be answered. On the other hand, I could only offer arguments of a private and personal nature, though I had believed them to be unanswerable. But when the private and the personal came to be weighed against the apparent public reasons, the private and the personal yielded to the public, and I surrendered my inclination, and I may say also my judgment, to the opinions and to the judgment of my friends. (*Cheers.*)

'Mr. Gladstone told me that he did not wish me to accept any office that was inferior in importance or in emolument to any held by any one of his colleagues; and he proposed that I should accept the position of Secretary of State for India. (*Cheers.*) Now, very many of my friends have urged in times past that I should undertake this office, and not a few have expressed regret that I have not accepted it now. In a sentence, therefore, I think it right to explain why I took the course which led to my declining such an important post. You know that twelve years ago, just before I came here, I suffered from an entire breakdown of my health, which cut me off from public labours for about two years. The Indian Department, I believe, is one of very heavy work, and I felt I was not justified in accepting it unless there was great probability of some useful result which could not be accomplished under any other chief of that office. (*Hear, hear.*) I still retain the opinion that the views which I have expressed in times past—especially in the year 1858, when the India Government Bill was passing through Parliament—are sound, and that the time will come when it will be necessary to apply them to the government of India. But I believe that public opinion is not sufficiently advanced to allow us to adopt them; and that if I had taken that office I should have found myself unable to carry into effect the principles which I believe to be right with regard to the government of India. At the same time I will confess freely that it did not appear seemly for me, and that I should have been in a wrong place, holding the views which I have held from my youth upwards, if I had connected myself distinctly with the conduct of the great military departments of the Indian Government. (*Hear, hear.*) Looking, therefore, at these points, I felt it my duty to decline the proposition; and I said that if I was to accept any seat in this Government I should prefer to take the office of President of the Board of Trade. (*Cheers.*) In that office I may do a little good, and perhaps I may prevent some harm. (*Laughter.*) At least it will not, I hope, so burden me that I may be unable to take a part in the discussion of the great questions which must come very speedily before the House of Commons. Having said thus much, I must ask you to consider that, although I stand before you in a new character, I have not the smallest intention of getting rid of my old one. I hope the time has arrived in this country—it has only recently arrived—when a man may, perhaps without difficulty, act as an honest Minister of the Crown, and at the same time as an honest and devoted servant and counsellor of the people.' (*Cheers.*)

Mr. Bright then went on to ask the patience of his constituents if in time to come he was called upon to make a temporary concession, not of principles, but of matters affecting time and opportunity, for the purpose of maintaining harmony

of action among the members of the Government. Speaking of the work of the Government, he observed with regard to the Irish Church that the time for argument had passed, and the time for action had arrived. Alluding to the scandalous way in which elections were now conducted, he held that the adoption of the ballot was not only proper, but inevitable. It was absolutely necessary that public attention should be called to the whole subject of our mode of election. The question of public and national education was also a question which Parliament would no doubt consider, and which no Government could altogether leave out of the catalogue of things which must be considered and must be done. As to our scandalous public expenditure, its reduction, to be considerable and to be effectual, must be extended over several sessions of Parliament. The Administration, to entitle itself to the support of the country, should from session to session exercise a rigid economy, and lessen in a corresponding degree the oppressive and intolerable taxation which pressed heavily upon the English people. The foreign policy of the day was now not to meddle and muddle, and that was what he (Mr. Bright) had always preached from public platforms. So long as Parliament exacted from the industry of the people seventy millions a year, there was no power on earth that could raise the poor and suffering population from its present position. But there were powerful agencies and services which fought against reduction, and the Government required all the patience, sympathy, and support which the great body of the people could give them in their endeavours to reduce expenditure and to lesson and equalize taxation.

Having observed that the Government must be judged by its acts, Mr. Bright closed with this touchingly simple personal passage:—

'I have not aspired at any time of my life to the rank of a Privy Councillor, nor to the dignity of a Cabinet office. I should have preferred much to have remained in that common rank of simple citizenship in which hitherto I have lived. There is a passage in the Old Testament which has often struck me as being one of great beauty. Many of you will recollect that the prophet, in journeying to and fro, was very hospitably entertained by what is termed in the Bible a Shunammite woman. In return for her hospitality, he wished to make her some amends, and he called her to him and asked her what there was he should do for her. "Shall I speak for thee to the king," he said, "or to the captain of the host?" Now it has always appeared to me that the Shunammite woman returned a great answer. She replied, in declining the prophet's offer, "I dwell among mine own people." (*Cheers.*) When the question was put to me whether I would step into the position in which I now find myself, the answer from my heart was the same—I wish to dwell among mine own people. (*Great applause.*) Happily, the time

may have come—I trust it has come—when in this country an honest man may enter the service of the Crown, and at the same time not feel it in any degree necessary to dissociate himself from his own people. (*Cheers.*) Some partial friends of mine have said that I have earned all this by my long services in the popular cause. (*Hear, hear, and cheers.*) They know not what they say. They would add labour to labour, and would compensate a life of service by a redoubled responsibility. I am sensible of the duty which is imposed upon me as a Minister of the Crown. It is my duty faithfully to perform that which belongs to such a position; but I have not less faithfully to act as becomes an honest representative of the people. (*Cheers.*) I shall make the attempt. There are many who believe the attempt must fail. I hope that it will not fail. I will do all that I can to make it succeed. And if I should find that the two offices of which I am speaking are inconsistent or discordant, I hope at least that I shall be able to discover which of them it is right for me to surrender.' (*Cheers.*)

No opposition was offered to Mr. Bright's re-election. With regard to his acceptance of office, the entire press of the country endorsed his decision in this matter. The right hon. gentleman performed his duties with general acceptability, as might have been expected from his long training in business habits, though it was not a little remarkable to find the impassioned orator answering questions connected with his department from all the dry details of trade up to, or down to, 'bottle-nosed whales.'

The Irish speeches of Mr. Bright in the sessions of 1868 and 1869 have been already dealt with; but there were two other speeches during these sessions on questions of public moment which call for treatment here. The first of these, delivered in the session of 1868, referred to Nova Scotia and the Confederation scheme. An Act had been passed in the previous session for uniting the British North American provinces in one Confederation, and this Act met with a very adverse reception from a considerable portion of the inhabitants of Nova Scotia. Remonstrances were addressed to the Crown, and the attention of the British Parliament was directed to the matter. A series of resolutions were passed in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly on the 21st of February, 1867, to the effect that the Assembly, in consenting to Confederation, had acted in excess of its powers; that even if it possessed such a right, it had not empowered the delegates to form a Confederation which should omit Newfoundland and Prince Edward's Island; and that the scheme consented to did not ensure just provision for the rights and interests of the province, but, if finally confirmed, would deprive the people of the province of their rights, liberty, and independence. Other resolutions equally strong and definite were also adopted, and the passing of the bill through the Imperial Parliament was imputed to 'fraud and

deception' committed by persons who misrepresented the public sentiment of the colony.

The case of the remonstrants was powerfully stated by Mr. Bright in the House of Commons. He not only presented a petition to the House, complaining of the absorption of the province into Canada by the Confederation Act, but on the 16th of June brought forward a motion for inquiry, giving in his speech effective expression to the grievances of the petitioners. In the outset, he traced with great detail the history of the question of Confederation for some years back, and maintained that the Nova Scotians had never agreed to anything beyond an union of the maritime provinces. The Legislature, by sanctioning the plan, had acted contrary to the wishes of the people; the assent of the British Parliament had been obtained, if not by fraud, at least by extravagant over-colouring of the facts; and the Government, when they were pressing the bill on with indecent haste, knew that Nova Scotia was averse to it. Mr. Bright mentioned, as a proof of the public opinion in the colony, that at the last general election, out of fifty-seven members elected to the local and the colonial Parliament, only three were in favour of Confederation, although the influence of the Colonial Office, of the military services, of the Canada officials, and the name of the Queen had been used on that side. He therefore proposed an Address to the Crown, praying that a Commission might be sent out to enquire into the causes of the discontent felt by the Nova Scotians; and from such an enquiry he anticipated either that some modifications might be made in the Confederation which would meet the wishes of Nova Scotia, or that the union might be confined to the maritime provinces, or to the Canadas alone. To refuse the enquiry would be to follow up the foolish haste of last year by more perilous obstinacy, and he warned the House in the most solemn tone—deprecating, however, any such unhappy result—that to turn a deaf ear to these complaints of the colony would be the first step towards throwing it into the arms of the United States.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Baxter, but opposed from the Treasury Bench by Mr. Adderley, who, while not denying the discontent, said that Confederation was the only alternative of annexation to the United States, as these provinces could not remain forever in an independent position. Mr. Cardwell believed that the discontent would pass away, and supported the action of the Legislature. At the close of the debate, Mr.

Bright replied forcibly to the arguments which had been raised, but the motion for enquiry was rejected by 183 to 87.

In the session of 1869, Mr. (now Sir) T. Chambers made an attempt—not by any means the first which had been made—to effect the legalization of marriage with a deceased wife's sister. On the motion for the second reading, Mr. Sclater-Booth moved the rejection of the bill. Mr. Beresford-Hope looked at the question in a very remarkable light. He maintained that the whole tendency of the oft-quoted chapter in Leviticus was against these marriages, and that they had always been condemned by the ecclesiastical law.

Such reasoning on a question of this kind, which was supported by the great bulk of the people, including the religious societies, drew a warm speech from Mr. Bright. He said he had never heard, nor did he expect to hear, an argument against the bill. The opposition rested entirely on sentiment. Speaking of the ecclesiastical 'rubbish' which had been urged against the change, the right hon. gentleman said, 'I recollect that a very distinguished relation of my hon. and learned friend the Solicitor-General (Mr. Coleridge), in one of his poems, speaks of

> "Warriors, lords, and priests,—all the sore ills
> That vex and desolate our mortal life."

Little sympathy as I have with warriors and lords as devastators and rulers of mankind, I am not sure that the mischiefs which they have inflicted upon our race have been greater than those we have suffered from the domination and tyranny of priests.'

Mr. Bright argued that the matter was one of freedom, and the right of every man to follow the law of his own conscience. If there was no Divine law against these marriages, the natural liberty of man and woman ought not to be interfered with except on an overwhelming necessity. There was no reason why a man should be prevented marrying any woman willing to marry him, except natural kinship of blood, and on this ground there was more objection to the marriage of first cousins than with a deceased wife's sister. He urged as proofs of the legitimacy of these marriages that the persons who contracted them excited no feelings of condemnation among their friends and neighbours, and that none would be so cruel as to stigmatize the offspring of them by the odious epithet of bastard. With respect to the social inconveniences, and the interference with the position of sisters-in-law, apprehended from the change, he pointed

out that they had never been experienced in the countries where these marriages prevailed, and he drew a forcible argument from the inevitably unequal operation of the law, the poor not being able to escape from it, while the rich could repair to more tolerant foreign countries. He entreated the House to give by an emphatic vote their sanction to the principle that the common liberty of men and women in this country, in the chief concern of their lives, should not be interfered with by a law of Parliament which had no foundation in nature, and which, while pretending to sanction from revelation, was, in fact, contrary to its dictates.

It was rather singular that the Solicitor-General followed Mr. Bright, and opposed the bill, though he admitted it was difficult for an opponent to discuss it 'after such a speech from the greatest orator of the day.' When the division was taken, there was a majority of 99 in favour of the second reading, 243 voting for and 144 against the bill. Mr. Chambers, however, was compelled to withdraw it on the 2nd of August, and in doing so he strongly complained of the obstructive tactics which had been made use of to defeat the measure.

There was a brilliant gathering at the hall of the Trinity House, on Tower Hill, on the 3rd of July, 1869, when the members of that corporation entertained the Prince of Wales and other members of the Royal Family, Her Majesty's Ministers, and other distinguished persons. In the absence of the Duke of Edinburgh, the Master of the Corporation, the Prince of Wales presided, and was supported by Prince Arthur, Prince Christian, the Prince of Teck, Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, Mr. Lowe, Mr. Disraeli, Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, Mr. Cardwell, and others. Amongst the toasts of the evening was that of 'The maritime and commercial interests of the country, and the health of the President of the Board of Trade,' proposed by Lord Taunton. In his reply, Mr. Bright observed, 'I have sometimes imagined what a scene would be presented if any man could from a height survey all the land and waters of the globe. He would see men in every land preparing something to find its way to this country. And if he could look over the waters he would see ships driven either by the winds, or, what is more potent, by steam, bringing from thousands of sources the produce of the industry of man in every country of the world to the shores of this country, to supply the necessities, comforts, and luxuries of the various classes of our people.' On another question, Mr. Bright observed, 'For myself, I could never understand why such great

navies should be kept up. I would forego all the luxuries of life rather than be tempted to obtain them by crossing the sea. Such are the perils of the deep that I confess I never hear the wind howling, or see the storm raging, or the clouds drifting, but I think of my countrymen on stormy seas. Therefore I have a strong sympathy with the lifeboat system, and no less sympathy with the great and benign objects of this corporation. I know not what may be the fate of that corporation. I hope it may so come up with the requirements of the times, and keep up with them, that it will never need to be either disendowed or disestablished. The subject to which I have referred leads me to hope that the industries of our country may be sustained, that its commerce may be wider and wider diffused, that with an economical Government—it is long since we had one—(*laughter*)—that with an economical Government, and the efforts which I trust will before long be made to support a general and universal education among our people, they may grow in all that is good, and that our country, great and glorious as she is, may be destined for long generations and centuries to hold her place among the nations.'

Early in January, 1870, a deputation waited upon Mr. Bright, asking him to procure some mitigation in the sentences passed on the Fenian prisoners. In reply, Mr. Bright said: 'Though I have been one who has always spoken strongly in favour of changes, and changes which we showed by demonstration were right to be made, still, for all that, I am bound to say that I know no greater enemy to our country than the man who attempts by force of arms to disturb the public peace, and to break down the authority of the laws. Least of all are those to be excused who, being in a country to which they have emigrated, and thereby escaped from what they supposed to be the tyranny and oppression here, are free to do what they please, yet conspire against our common country. I cannot see that any kind of allowance is to be made for such persons.' The right hon. gentleman, however, continued with regard to the prisoners whose claims were specially urged, 'It will be to me the greatest possible delight, as I believe it would be most certainly to every member of the Government, if they could at once throw open the prison doors and let all these men go free. But they must consult what they believe to be the safety of the country, and they must take into consideration the general state of public opinion on this subject throughout the United Kingdom. The Government cannot go before, and it ought not to lag much behind, public opinion.' It may be stated that before

the close of the year Mr. Gladstone granted an amnesty to the Fenian prisoners still detained at Portland, but coupled with the condition of banishment from the United Kingdom for life, without distinction of persons.

When Parliament met in 1870, Mr. Bright was suffering from symptoms of illness such as had prostrated him in the year 1856. He was quite unable to attend the House of Commons, and asked Mr. Gladstone to permit him to retire from his office in the Government. Mr. Gladstone objected, and expressed a hope that he would be able to be in his place on the second reading of the Irish Land Bill—to which Mr. Bright replied that he felt he should not return during the session,—that on a former occasion he had been absent for two years, and now he thought his condition still more serious. This proved to be the fact. He spent some weeks at Norwood, and in Brighton, during February and March; he then went down to Llandudno, where he spent six months, for much of the time in a state of great feebleness, unable to write, or to read, or even to converse, except with Mrs. Bright and his daughter, who were constant in their attendance upon him. In the month of October he returned home, to his house at Rochdale, and in December he urged Mr. Gladstone to forward his resignation of his office to the Queen, feeling certain that for at least another year he should not be able to undertake any Parliamentary or official duty. The resignation was reluctantly accepted.*

During the year 1871 Mr. Bright spent some months in Scotland, and paid a visit to Mr. Bass, M. P., at Glen Tulchan Lodge, on the Spey; here, as on former occasions, he received great kindness, and his health sensibly improved. Scotland

* The whole of the London and provincial press of course commented upon the retirement. The *Times* observed that Mr. Bright carried with him into retirement the hopes as well as the good wishes of his countrymen. The *Daily Telegraph* remarked that 'the middle classes of this country may search for many a long day before they find so true a representative as John Bright.' The *Daily News* affirmed that Englishmen, without distinction of party, would share in the regret at Mr. Bright's resignation. The *Morning Post* said there was probably not a man in the country, be his politics what they might, who would not receive the intelligence with the greatest concern and regret. 'The loss of such a figure,' said the *Spectator*, 'if we are to lose it—or even to lose the most characteristic signs of it—from our political world, is a loss we can ill afford. As a Radical and a Democrat, he has taught the nation to measure popular feeling by a high standard,—a standard beside which all mock oratory is at once perceived to be artificial and dishonest,—and this alone has purified the atmosphere of the political school he represented, while his grand and nervous English has left to English literature a rich legacy of renown.' The leading provincial journals expressed themselves in similar terms.

has always had great charms for Mr. Bright; two lines from his pen or voice were once quoted by a Scotch gentleman proud of his country:—

> 'Land of mountain, strath, and stream,
> Glorious land, art thou a dream?'

and this 'glorious land' he has always preferred to those portions of the Continent most frequented by English travellers. That the salmon river has charms for him need not be denied. It was in 1856, during his long illness, that, at the urgent recommendation of the late Dr. M'Leod, of Ben Rhydding, he began to cast a fly on the pools and streams of the Scottish rivers. As the result of this exercise—from spending many hours almost daily on the river's bank—he recovered the health he had lost in the long nights in the House of Commons, and in the fierce political conflicts of the time which preceded the years 1856 and 1870. It was not the instinct of the sportsman, but the search for health, which connected Mr. Bright with so many of the rivers of Scotland.

While at his residence of One Ash, in January, 1872, he addressed the following letter on the Home Rule question—which was then a prominent topic of discussion—to The O'Donoghue: 'It is said that some persons engaged in the canvass of the county of Kerry have spoken of me as an advocate of what is termed Home Rule in Ireland. I hope no one has ventured to say anything so absurd and untrue. If it has been said by any one of any authority in the county, I shall be glad if you will contradict it. To have two representative legislative assemblies or Parliaments in the United Kingdom would, in my opinion, be an intolerable mischief; and I think no sensible man can wish for two within the limits of the present United Kingdom who does not wish the United Kingdom to become two or more nations, entirely separated from each other. Excuse me for troubling you with this. It is no duty of mine to interfere in your contest, but I do not wish to be misrepresented.'

A meeting of representative working men of London was held in Bolt Court on the 13th of February, 1872, to consider the propriety of presenting a congratulatory address to Mr. Bright on his restoration to health and return to public life. The right hon. gentleman was asked whether he would receive the address, and name a day for its presentation. In his reply to this 'kind and flattering proposal,' Mr. Bright wrote: 'I am not going up to London to attend Parliament immediately,

although it is a great disappointment to me to be so long absent from the duties which I owe to my constituents; but I know well that it is far better for me to give myself a little more time than to plunge into the turmoil of public life before I am well enough to encounter it. I must ask you to let the matter rest for a time. I cannot object to receive your address, so kindly intended and so complimentary; but I should prefer a postponement of it to some period which may be better for me, and perhaps not less convenient for those who may wish to see me in connection with it. I beg you will convey my thanks to those with whom you are associated, for the kindness they intend to show me. I am very sensible of the value of their goodwill and friendship.'

The scene of his oratorical triumphs at Westminster did, however, receive a flying visit from Mr. Bright on the 11th of April, 1872. He attended before the commencement of the sitting and the arrival of the Speaker for prayers. An account of this visit states that 'as members came in, without distinction of party, they gathered round the right hon. gentleman, who sat for some little time in the seat just below his usual place, and greeted him with great cordiality. For some time Mr. Bright held a kind of *levee*, group after group forming about him. He afterwards took his old place at the upper corner of the second bench below the gangway, and remained there until prayers had been said. After a short conversation with the Speaker he left the House He also visited the Reform Club, where he was most heartily received. Traces of the trying illness through which he had passed were noticeable. His hair, which before his illness was dark or grizzled, and abundant, had become perfectly white, imparting, together with his florid complexion, a venerable appearance.'

In his retirement, Mr. Bright could not escape those communications which beset all public men. Perhaps the most remarkable item in his correspondence, however, was a letter from a gentleman who had been told that the English Republicans would select Mr. Bright as their first president, and who wrote to ask whether he would accept the post. Mr. Bright replied as follows: 'Your Republican friend must not be a very desperate character if he proposes to make me his first president, though I doubt if he can be a friend of mine. As to *opinions* on the question of monarchy or republicanism, I hope and believe it will be a long time before we are asked to give our opinion: our ancestors decided the matter a good while since, and I would suggest that you and I should leave any

further decision to our posterity. Now from your letter, I conclude you are willing to do this, and I can assure you I am not less willing.'

In July, 1872, the friends of Mr. Bright residing in Staffordshire Potteries made him a suitable and noteworthy presentation, in the shape of a cabinet and collection of ceramic art. The walnut cabinet, which was in the style of Louis XVI., was designed by Mr. F. W. Moody. Divided into two compartments, the upper was filled with vases and other examples of the art and industry of the district, executed at the various manufactories of Messrs. Minton, Messrs. Wedgwood, and Messrs. Copeland. In the lower compartment were three majolica vases by Wedgwood. The decorations of one of the choicest pieces of Staffordshire ware were emblematic of Mr. Bright's career and services. The inscription upon the cabinet read as follows: 'To the Right Hon. John Bright, M.P., whose foresight, eloquence, and faithful character have greatly contributed to his country's prosperity, these specimens of ceramic art are presented by admirers in the Staffordshire Potteries.' The presentation took place at Rochdale, in Mr. Bright's house, and it was accompanied by an address setting forth Mr. Bright's services in the cause of the people, and expressing a hope that he might speedily be restored to perfect health, and to his place in the national councils. A deputation of ten gentlemen had been appointed to wait upon the right hon. gentleman, and the presentation was made by Mr. Thomas Pidduck, ex-Mayor of Hanley, and Chairman of the Central Committee.

Mr. Bright, in reply, observed that this was one of the occasions when men who were most accustomed to public speaking found it difficult to express what they feel. The present gift had a special significance. 'Those who make me this gift are persons of whom I have had, until recently, no knowledge whatever, and I presume they know nothing of me except in my public character. I may assume, therefore, as I assume from your kind address, that my public course and labours have met generally, not probably in all cases, but generally, with the consent and approval of those whom you represent. At the same time, I am deeply touched with the consideration of the circumstances under which, and the time at which, this gift is made. The idea was not formed when I was actively engaged before the public, either as a member of Parliament or a member of an Administration. I had not returned with friends and associates from any fresh political success. On the contrary, I was suffering from a severe and protracted illness. It was at a

time when it was not unlikely that I should never again be able to return to public life. I was enfeebled and prostrate to an extent only known to my own family. And at that time your kindness and friendship were awakened, and you conceived the idea of doing me this honour and marking your approbation by this gift. I think, therefore, that, more than on ordinary occasions, I have reason to feel deeply grateful for the kindness you have manifested to me.'

Referring to the subjects mentioned in the address, Mr. Bright showed the beneficial effects which had followed from the abolition of the Corn and Navigation Laws. He also touched upon the enormous change which had taken place with regard to the public press. 'Every one who judges impartially must admit at this time, if we look at the ability, the intelligence, and the general morality with which the press is conducted and written, that it is superior—largely superior—to that which we observed, those at least of us who were able to observe, in the condition of the press thirty or forty years ago.' With respect to the extension of the suffrage, the bill of 1867 had enabled Parliament to do what it had been totally incapable of doing in any previous time—to set up in Ireland for ever complete religious equality, and to bestow upon the vast body of the Irish agricultural peasantry and tenantry some real security for their property. The ballot also had been established.

Alluding to questions of foreign policy, Mr. Bright remarked that the most important fact in connection with this policy in our time was the Crimean war. He had opposed that war, and looking back for fifteen years, he felt that he was never more justified in any political course which he had taken than he was on that occasion. Only last year the English Government had consented, wisely and necessarily, to surrender what he believed was considered the principal result with the war with Russia—a surrender which ought not to have been necessary, because that which had been enforced upon Russia was what no independent and powerful country would ever long submit to.* As to his attitude on the American civil war, Mr. Bright said: 'My object was to counsel what at one time I called a generous and not an unfriendly neutrality. I call you to witness, and the whole country to witness. whether; if we had pursued that course of

* Mr. Bright referred to the annulment of the clause in the Treaty of Paris which secured the neutralization of the Black Sea—a clause which Russia always protested against, as operating injuriously against her.

generous neutrality, we should not have escaped embarrassments, negotiations, concessions, and humiliations to which we have been subjected for several years past.' But in this matter he did not pretend to be wiser than many others who had thought with him. In concluding, he observed,—

'Let us look for a moment, and only for a moment, at the great changes which thirty years have made. There are countries which have gone through strange and sanguinary revolutions, and have not been able to make changes so wise and so wholly satisfactory. If those changes had not been made—I will undertake to say that if the Corn Laws had been maintained, if there had been a power which could have maintained them in their unrestricted and cruel character, nothing less than anarchy and insurrection could have followed:

"For men will break in their sublime despair
The bonds which nature can no longer bear."

Yet all this has been done in this country with scarcely a single hour's riot and without, so far as I remember, the sacrifice of a single drop of blood. I suppose there is yet a party in this country which complains of everything that we have said, and nearly everything that we have done. They have obstructed everything, they have contested every point, and they appear to be so ignorant and incapable of discussing these questions and considering them, that they may be said to be absolutely incurable. That party still appeals, in all its ancient audacity, to the support of the people. I think about the only consolation we have—and it is one dictated by Christian charity—is that they may partake, opponents though they have been—partake fully of the good things which we have provided for them; for as the sun shines and the rain descends alike on just and unjust, so the blessings of a wise and beneficent legislation are participated in, not more fully by those who have promoted it than by those who have pertinaciously obstructed it.'

Being unable to address his constituents, as he desired, in January, 1873, Mr. Bright wrote to a friend as follows: 'There are two questions to which you refer that are probably too large to be undertaken with any degree of completeness in the last years of a Parliament. I allude to the state of the county representation and to the land question. They seem to me the great questions of the immediate future; and the more they are discussed by the public, the more will Parliament be prepared to deal with them. The question of expenditure is one which demands resolute handling. If the present Government is unable to grapple with it, it should only show us how great are the interests which oppose themselves to economy, and how much an earnest public opinion is wanted to arrest the extravagant and scandalous expenditure which every statesman in turn condemns, and which not one of them seems able to diminish.'

Mr. Gladstone reconstructed his Cabinet in August, 1873, and Mr. Bright accepted the office of Chancellor of the Duchy

of Lancaster, in succession to Mr. Childers. Early in October the right hon. gentleman issued an address to his constituents, seeking re-election. 'The office I have accepted,' he wrote, 'is not one of heavy departmental duty, or I could not have ventured upon it, but it will enable me to take part in the deliberations of the Cabinet, and to render services to principles which I have often expounded in your hearing, and which you have generally approved,—more important, I believe, than any I could render in the House of Commons unconnected with the Government. I do not write to you a long address, for I am not a stranger to you. I hold the principles when in office that I have constantly professed since you gave me your confidence sixteen years ago. When I find myself unable to advance those principles, and to serve you honestly as a Minister, I shall abandon a position that demands of me sacrifices which I cannot make.'

The right hon. gentleman was returned without opposition, and on the 22nd he addressed his constituents at Bingley Hall, Birmingham. The occasion was one never to be forgotten. The Hall, which holds between fifteen and twenty thousand persons, was densely crowded.'*

When Mr. Bright entered the central gallery from the side, 'there arose at once a deafening uproar, as the entire mass of people in the galleries and on the floor abandoned themselves to an irrepressible enthusiasm of welcome. It was as if the Liberal party, so torpid of late that its enemies declared it to be expiring, had, recognizing its long-lost leader, suddenly found its old purpose and its old energy, and had risen to its feet with a

* Amongst those present were Mr. Childers, M.P., Mr. George Dixon, M.P., Mr. Watkin Williams, M.P., Mr. Shaw Lefevre, M. P., Mr. James Howard, M.P., Mr. Duncan Maclaren, M.P., the Hon. C. G. Lyttelton, M.P., Sir Charles Reed, M P., Mr. E. M. Richards, M.P., Mr. J. J. Colman M.P., Sir Thos. Bazley, M.P., Mr. Samuelson, M.P., the Hon. and Rev. W. H. Lyttelton, the Hon. Chandos Leigh, the Hon. Lyulph Stanley, Mr. J. Albert Bright (Mr. Bright's eldest son), Lady Scott, the Rev. J. Percival, of Clifton College; Revs. C. Vince, R. W. Dale, H. W. Crosskey, G. T. M'Carthy, Brooke Lambert, W. H. Blamire, and J. J. Brown, and Messrs. Jaffray, Middlemore, Chamberlain, Sturge, Bunce, Manton, Timmins, Pemberton, etc. The following associations were also represented—Blackburn Reform Club, West Cheshire Liberal Association, National Reform Union, Leeds and Salford Liberal Associations, the National Amalgamated Society of Brassworkers, the Birmingham Law Society, East Worcestershire Liberal Registration Association, Leigh Reform Union, Bury, Wolverhampton, Burnley, Ledbury, and Wrexham and Denbigh Liberal Associations, the London, Manchester, and Todmorden Reform Clubs, the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control, the Coventry Liberal Club, Marsden and Huddersfield Liberal Associations, Manchester Liberal Club, Kendal Liberal Reform Association, and the National Agricultural Labourers' Union,

bound, eager for battle, and confident of victory. That, at any rate, was the significance of the tempestuous cheering and the frantic waving of hats and handkerchiefs; and the frenzy invaded and subjugated even the ladies in their distant retreat.' The Mayor presided, and called upon Mr. J. S. Wright to move the following resolution: 'That, in the name of his constituents, and on behalf of the country, this meeting offers to Mr. Bright heartfelt congratulation on his restoration to health; that it rejoices in his ability to resume the labours of statesmanship; and that it regards his entrance into the Ministry as a pledge of distinctly Liberal policy in the future, and as a means of reviving the enthusiasm of the Liberal party, and especially of that section of it which has been alienated by recent legislation.' The latter part of the resolution referred to the Nonconformists, and the grievances of which they strongly complained under the Education Acts. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain seconded the resolution, and made a very felicitous allusion at the close of his observations. If, he said, the Ministerial policy had recently struck false notes and jarred with Liberal principles, until these had been 'like sweet bells jangling out of tune and harsh,' now they looked hopefully forward, expecting a master-hand once more to touch the string, and confident that the first strain of the old harmony would dispel the evil spirits of obstruction and reaction which previous discord had started into life.

Upon Mr. Bright rising to speak, there was another demonstration, which visibly moved the speaker himself. Observing that it was nearly five years since he stood in that hall, Mr. Bright said that his heart was full at this fresh manifestation of the confidence and good opinion of his constituents. If he looked back a little, it would not be with the view of entering into enthusiastic laudation of the Administration; but at the same time the past five years were memorable years, and the measures of the Administration would bear comparison with those of any Government which had ever preceded it. They had lived to see that an Establishment might be removed, and yet that a Church might exist and religion prosper without the support of the State. Another great principle had been established by the Irish Land Act of 1870, for there had since been no diminution of rent, and no insecurity in its payment. Further, by the abolition of purchase in the army the corruption market had been closed forever in that department of the public service. The ballot had been established; so had also another valuable principle, namely, that the House of Peers should no longer continue to be the highest court of justice in the kingdom.

The manner in which Mr. Bright spoke his opening sentences, said the leading local journal, and the way in which he gratefully testified to the fidelity of his constituency during the four years in which his voice had been silent, bore testimony that in meeting his constituents again the feeling of satisfaction was not all on one side. His declaration that he was speaking, not as a member of the Administration, but as a member for Birmingham, was hailed with loud applause; and his incisive sketch of the disastrous effects of the Education Act—in which he touched the crucial question of all—was recognized as a stroke in the right direction, and an indication that those who had believed he would continue faithful to the traditions of his life had not witnessed his career in vain. With the mention of the Twenty-fifth Clause the interest heightened, and the silence grew deeper still. His condemnation of the 'evil principle' inherent in the operation of the clause, and his open expression of opinion that that principle ought not to continue, were greeted with rapturous cheers, and the leaders of local Liberal opinion on the subject exchanged gratified smiles. Mr. Bright spoke to restore confidence, but not to make indiscreet confidences, and he did not explain the mode in which, while he professed a full belief that the grievances of Nonconformists could be redressed, he would propose to deal with them. In regard to his alleged—but falsely alleged—share in the Education Act, he made a complete exculpation of himself. He had nothing to do with the measure at first; he was not able to take part in the debates; and, further, he was so prostrated that it was not even safe for him to follow the course of the educational legislation. But Mr. Bright condemned the Act on the ground that it extended and confirmed the system which it ought to have superseded. It really encouraged denominational education, and it established Boards only where that system did not exist, whereas it should have attempted to establish Boards everywhere, and to bring the denominational schools under their control. The denominational system, in consequence of the parochial organization of the Church, must be said to be a Church system; hence the Nonconformists were aggrieved, and justly aggrieved.

Referring to the Geneva arbitration and the settlement of the *Alabama* claims, Mr. Bright replied to those who talked of the treaty of 1872 as though it were a great humiliation to England. The humiliation was not in 1872; it took place between the years 1861 and 1865; and he ventured to say that when the pen of history narrated what had been done with regard to

this question, it would say that the treaty, the arbitration, and the conduct of Earl Granville, Mr. Gladstone, and their colleagues, added a nobler chapter to the history of England than if they had filled it with the records of bloody battles.

The right hon. gentleman proceeded to instance matters which were coming to the front and demanding legislation, especially dwelling upon the county franchise and the land question. There were also workmen's questions—the law of conspiracy, molestation, and the Masters and Servants Act. Then there was the Budget, and the question of a free breakfast table—tea, sugar, and coffee. Speaking upon general policy, and referring to Mr. Disraeli's famous Bath letter, which described Liberal policy as 'a career of plundering and blundering,' Mr. Bright said—

'The policy of the Liberal party is known. It is before the public; it is not concealed; it is no mystery. What is the policy of the Opposition? (*Laughter, and cries of "None."*) We were told the other day that the leader of the Opposition was in "a state of strict seclusion," and but for that strange and unfortunate epistolatory outburst we should have had no idea of the desperate state of mind in which he has been. (*Laughter and cheers.*) But still, if we ask for the policy of the Opposition, all is impenetrably dark, and all that we know is that nothing can be known. (*Laughter.*) No, I beg pardon, I am wrong in that,—we know this, that, according to the Opposition, all the past twenty, and, if you like, all the past forty years, is evil; but as to the future, you will see it when it comes. (*Cheers.*)

'But let me tell you this—that the great statesmanship which consists in silence and secrecy is not original; it is a mere copy. Thirty or forty years ago—I recollect the time very well—there was a great fervor and mania for speculation. Everybody went into everything, and they generally came out with nothing. I recollect quite well an advertisement of a Great Sunflower Company—(*laughter*),—and if anybody had proposed so unsubstantial a speculation as the equinoctial line, people would have taken shares in it. Now at that time there was a very ingenious fellow—if I could remember his name I would try to immortalize him. He put out a prospectus. He was what they call a "promoter" of a great company. It was to have great capital, a great number of shares, and great profits. Everything was great about it. It was to work a great invention. It was a great secret—so profound a secret that, until all the money was paid in, nobody was to know what it was. (*Laughter.*) Now, that is the Conservative policy at this moment. (*Cheers.*) They have a policy which they offer for the coming elections. It is a profound secret. When you have all given your votes, and returned a Conservative majority, perhaps then they will tell you what it is.' (*Laughter and cheers.*)

Mr. Bright went on to observe that it was a difficult matter for the Conservatives to get over forty such years of progress as we had had in this country; and the Liberals were entitled to the merit and glory of the administration and legislation of that remarkable period. He then came to his peroration, as follows:—

'I have been reading lately a great number of letters which were addressed to me by my dear friend Mr. Cobden during our long friendship, and I have

read also a journal consisting of memoranda narrating what took place in Paris when he was there negotiating the Commercial Treaty with France. He had to try to persuade the Emperor Napoleon to follow the example of this country with regard to the reduction of import duties, and the establishment of something like freedom of trade. He told the Emperor how great the benefits had been of the policy of Sir Robert Peel, and how great was the regard and reverence felt for Sir Robert. The Emperor said that he should be charmed and flattered if he could think it possible that he could do things of a kind which would be so good for his country. (*Hear, hear.*) "But," he added, "it is very difficult in France. In England you make reforms, in France we make revolutions." (*Hear, hear.*) Now, observe, the Emperor was a man who had lived in this country for years; he had watched the workings of public opinion and of our institutions from the retirement of his exile; and afterwards, for nearly twenty years, he watched them from the lofty stage of the Imperial throne. And that was his judgment; that was the statement which he made to one of the foremost Englishmen, representing much of English opinion, sent by the English Government to negotiate with him the great Treaty of Commerce. But I believe that there is not a thoughtful statesman in any civilized country in the world who would not join with the Emperor in expressing his admiration of the manner in which the people of this country, for the last forty years, have worked out such substantial reforms in their legislation; and our own experience brings us to the same conclusion. (*Cheers.*)

'Those men are in error who tell you nothing has been done, and that all remains to be done. Those men are not less in error who tell you that what has been done is evil, and that it is evil to do anything more. What you should do is to act upon the principles and rules of past years, steadily advancing in favour of questions which the public has thoroughly discussed, which it thoroughly comprehends, and which Parliament can honestly and conscientiously put into law. For my part, looking back over these forty years, I feel some little sense of comfort. But it does not in the least degree lessen—on the contrary, it rather adds to and strengthens—my hope for the future. (*Cheers.*) The history of the last forty years of this country, judged fairly—I speak of its legislation—is mainly a history of the conquests of freedom. (*Hear, hear.*) It will be a grand volume that tells the story; and your name and mine, if I mistake not, will be found in some of its pages. For me, the final chapter is now writing,—it may be already written—("*No, no,*") but for you, this great constituency, you have a perpetual youth and a perpetual future. I pray Heaven that in the years to come, when my voice is hushed, you may be granted strength, and moderation, and wisdom to influence the counsels of your country by righteous means, for none other than noble and righteous ends.' (*Loud applause.*)

This speech was characterized by all Mr. Bright's former eloquence and vigour. The earnestness and impressiveness of the speaker, with the breadth and loftiness of view which distinguished the oration itself, produced an irresistible and overwhelming effect upon the vast audience.

A correspondent having sought from Mr. Bright an explanation of the term 'free land,' on the 2nd of November, 1873, the right hon. gentleman wrote that 'it means the abolition of the law of primogeniture and the limitation of the system of entails and settlements, so that "life interests" 'may for the most part be got rid of, and a real ownership substituted for

them. It means also that it shall be as easy to buy or sell land as to buy or sell a ship, or at least as easy as it is in Australia and in many or in all of the States of the American Union. It means that no legal encouragement shall be given to great estates and great farms, and that the natural forces of accumulation and dispersion shall have fair play, as they have with regard to ships and shares, and machinery and stock-in-trade and money. It means, too, that while the lawyer shall be well paid for his work, unnecessary work shall not be made for him, involving the enormous tax on all transactions in connection with the purchase and sale of lands and houses. A thorough reform in this matter would complete, with regard to land, the great work accomplished by the Anti-Corn-Law League in 1846. It would give an endless renown to the Minister who made it, and would bless to an incalculable extent all classes connected with and dependent on honest industry.'

For some time before the dissolution of Parliament in January, 1874, the popularity of Mr. Gladstone's Government had been slowly waning. The causes which were responsible for this were very various in character. The Church interest, on account of the disestablishment of the Irish Church, was strongly arrayed against the Ministry; the licensed victuallers were deeply offended by the legislation initiated by the Home Secretary; the Nonconformists were in arms against the important twenty-fifth clause in the Education Act; and many other classes had what they regarded as their special grievances. Besides all this, a general lethargy had crept over the Liberal party, and it had lost that zeal which it previously exhibited when Mr. Gladstone was carrying his great Irish measures and other reforms. Since the general election in 1868 there had been a large number of bye-elections, and in these contests the Liberals had lost thirty-two seats, while the Conservatives had lost only nine. The Liberal majority had fallen from 116 to about 70.

Under these circumstances, and wearied with the aspect of public affairs, the Premier —who had rendered his name for ever illustrious by the Irish Church and Land Acts, the Education and Ballot Acts, the Abolition of Purchase in the Army, and other measures—decided upon appealing to the country. It had become necessary to see whether the authority confided by the nation to the Liberal party and its leaders in 1868 was still continued to them. Accordingly, on the 24th of January, 1874, Mr. Gladstone issued a manifesto to the electors of

Greenwich, announcing the immediate dissolution of Parliament. After reviewing the work of his Government, and glancing at the condition of the country, the Prime Minister made some references to the revenue for the current year, announcing that he expected a surplus of £5,000,000. With this sum in hand he was able to point to the total repeal of the income tax, which he declared to be practicable. Mr. Disraeli replied to his rival's challenge by an address to the electors of Buckinghamshire, in which he complained of Mr. Gladstone's 'prolix narrrative.' He asked the electors to return him to the House of Commons, to resist every proposal which should tend to impair the strength of England, and to support by every means her imperial sway.

Parliament was dissolved on the 26th of January, and the elections were held immediately.

Mr. Bright issued the following address to the electors of Birmingham: "The Parliament elected in the year 1868 is about to be dissolved, and it will be your duty to select your representatives for the Parliament which is to succeed it. I have had the great honour of being one of your members for the period of sixteen years, and, except during a time of ill-health, I have endeavoured to perform the duties of my office with industry and fidelity. Very recently I addressed you in a published letter, and also at great length in a public speech. It is not, therefore, now necessary that I should enter into detail as to the past, or as to what I hope for in the future. The circumstances which have caused the dissolution of Parliament have been explained in the address which the First Minister has issued to the electors of Greenwich. It will be a great gratification to me, if, through your favor, I am enabled to take part in the wise policy indicated in that address. If arrangements are made for the Liberal candidates to attend a meeting of electors before the day of nomination or of poll, I hope to be able to be present and to take part in the proceedings.' The other Liberal candidates were Messrs. P. H. Muntz and George Dixon. Mr. Gilliver, a working-man's candidate, was brought forward in opposition to the sitting members, and his appearance was followed by that of Mr. S. Gedge, a Tory candidate, but both withdrew before the day of election.

The nomination took place on the 30th of January, and the old members, Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz, were returned without opposition. On the following day there was a great meeting in the Town Hall, when the members addressed their constituents.

Mr. Bright, who was received with much enthusiasm, again spoke with his old fire and energy. After some introductory observations, he said: 'As you stand by the grave of the dead Parliament, I am sure, whether you speak its funeral oration or you write its epitaph, you will be willing to say that it is one of the best and the noblest of the Parliaments whose doings have made the story of English history during many centuries past.' This observation was received with loud applause; and the speaker, eliciting in turn the cheers and laughter of his audience, continued as follows: 'But our opponents do not agree with us; they are an unhappy party. Whether in or out, they seem to me alike unfortunate. I have watched their agonies for thirty years. During that time, according to them, the constitution has received some scores of serious wounds, and several of those wounds, though it is curious to say so, have been pronounced fatal. They say that we—that is, the Liberal party—have disturbed classes and interests unnecessarily, that we have harassed almost all sorts of people, and have made ourselves very unpopular thereby. I doubt not that if they had been in the Wilderness, they would have condemned the Ten Commandments as a harassing piece of legislation, though it does happen that we have the evidence of more than thirty centuries to the wisdom and usefulness of those Commandments. Well, I plead guilty to the charge that we have disturbed a good many classes and a good many interests; but then, in pleading that, I offer as the justification that in no single case have we injured a class or interest, and in every case we have greatly benefited the country.' Mr. Bright then traced the history of the so-called disturbance process, beginning with Lord Grey and the Reform Bill of forty years ago. Having referred to the various great measures which the Tories said would ruin the country, the right hon. gentleman concluded as follows: 'For some years I have done little but look on. There have been errors which I have disapproved and have condemned; but if the Government has made errors—and no Government has lasted for five years that has not—I say that, looking on it with impartiality, its virtues amount to far greater measure than its errors. It was my expectation within the last year that when there came this dissolution—and it was not expected so soon—it was my expectation that I should have at that time to write, not an address offering myself as a candidate, but an address of farewell and final thanks. I did not think it was likely that I should ever again be able to take my place upon this platform to address you thus, or to speak in the House of Commons. But I

could not at this moment—it was impossible at such a juncture to take any other course than that which I have taken in offering myself again to you, if you chose to elect me. And though I am not strong to labour as I have been in past years, yet still possibly I may do something to promote the great interests of our country, and to guard the precious fruits of the many victories that we have won.'

Mr. Dixon and Mr. Muntz having also addressed the meeting, Mr. Jaffray moved the following resolution: 'That this meeting desires to express its great satisfaction at the unopposed return to Parliament of its three old and faithful members, Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz; and, recognizing in this great triumph a proof of the undiminished vigour and unity of the Liberal party in Birmingham, trusts it will stimulate the cause of advanced Liberalism throughout the country.' The resolution was seconded by Mr. R. W. Dale, and supported by Mr. George Dawson, who dwelt upon the strength of Birmingham Radicalism, which had the biggest heads, the heaviest purses, and the wisest men of the town upon its side. The resolution was carried unanimously, and with warm demonstrations of applause.

Although a defeat was in store for the Liberal party generally throughout the country, Birmingham proved itself one of the boroughs—perhaps the leading constituency—which remained most firmly true to its old traditions.

The result of .the general election was practically known by the middle of February. The Liberals sustained severe losses, and there was a majority of slightly over fifty for the Conservative party. On the 17th of February Mr. Gladstone tendered his resignation, and that of Mr. Bright and his other colleagues, to Her Majesty at Windsor. On the following day Mr. Disraeli was summoned by the Queen, and entrusted with the seals of office as Premier.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. BRIGHT ON THE EASTERN QUESTION.

The Eastern Question in 1875-76.—Insurrection in Turkish Provinces.—The Bulgarian Atrocities.—Mr. Gladstone's Pamphlet.—English Proposals to the Porte.—Meeting at the Manchester Reform Club.—Speech by Mr. Bright.—Mr. Disraeli's Address at Aylesbury.—The Constantinople Conference.—Great Speech by Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Lord Salisbury's Policy.—National Conference on the Eastern Question.—Failure of the Constantinople Conference. Russia declares War against Turkey in April, 1877.—Mr. Bright at Bradford.—Address on Affairs in the East.—Neutrality.—England and the European Concert.—Unfounded Jealousy of Russia.—Progress of the War.—Turkey desires the Mediation of the Powers.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Protest against War.—Retirement of Lords Derby and Carnarvon from the Ministry.—Debate on the Vote of Credit.—Treaty of Peace signed at San Stefano.—Despatch of Indian Troops to Malta.—War Excitement in England.—Anti-War Conference and Demonstration at Manchester.—Vigorous Speech by Mr. Bright.—Strong Condemnation of Lord Beaconsfield's Policy.—European Congress in July, 1878.—Conclusion of the Berlin Treaty.

THE Eastern Question, which for many years has been a continual source of difficulty to English and European statesmen, again assumed a complicated character in 1875. In May of that year insurrectionary movements broke out in Bosnia and the Herzegovina. The war with Turkey progressed with varying fortunes, and on the 14th of December the Sultan issued a decree ordering administrative reforms. This, however, was not deemed sufficient, and on the 31st of January, 1876, a note was presented to the Turkish Government by the united Governments of Austro-Hungary, Germany, and Russia, insisting upon wide and substantial reforms in the general administration of the Ottoman Empire. On the 23rd of February the Sultan issued a second decree, ordering the immediate execution of large administrative reforms. The insurrection spread into Bulgaria, however, and Turkish affairs were in a very disorganized condition. In July a joint declaration of war against the Ottoman Government was made by Servia and Montenegro. On the 31st of August, Murad V., who had been proclaimed Sultan after the deposition of Abdul Aziz, was himself deposed, and Abdul Hamid II. was installed as his successor.

In consequence of the terrible events which were occurring in Bulgaria, on the 6th of September Mr. Gladstone published

his pamphlet entitled 'Bulgarian Horrors.' It passed through almost countless editions, and created a great sensation. Its author also enunciated his views at a meeting of his constituents on Blackheath, denouncing the Turkish governing body as incapable of reform, and proposing their expulsion, 'bag and baggage,' from Europe. In a speech made at Aylesbury, Lord Beaconsfield admitted that the Ministerial policy upon the Eastern Question was unpopular. He admired, he said, the enthusiasm and the sympathy which prompted the cry for vengeance, but he strongly condemned 'the designing politicians who take advantage of such sublime sentiments, and apply them for the furtherance of their sinister ends.' Sir Henry Elliot, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, demanded on behalf of our Government the punishment of those who had been guilty of the atrocities in Bulgaria; and he was also instructed to propose as a basis for peace negotiations 'administrative autonomy' in the Herzegovina and Bosnia, and guarantees against maladministration in Bulgaria.

At this juncture, namely, on the 2nd of October, a crowded meeting of members of the Manchester Reform Club assembled at the invitation of Mr. B. Armitage, the president, to meet Mr. Bright, who had consented to address them on public affairs. Many members of Parliament and other influential persons were present. The event possessed something of historical interest, for it was now seen that Mr. Bright, who had been rejected at Manchester in consequence of the hostile attitude he assumed upon the Crimean war, was as popular as ever in this great constituency. As Mr. Armitage said, the separation came of a political aberration, for which penance had been done.

The country having lost faith in the regeneration of Turkey, Mr. Bright was in the position of a prophet whose prophecies had come true. In commencing his speech he adverted slightly to domestic matters, and then plunged into the question of the hour. He did not spare the authors of the Crimean war. He dwelt with emphasis on 'the mistakes—I had almost said the crimes—of twenty years ago.' The difference he found between the Liberal leaders and the Tory leaders in regard to the policy of the past was that the former had learned something since that time, and the latter had learned nothing. The Crimean war was a mistake, and the country had made up its mind that such a mistake should not be repeated. The people of England 'have found out, too, that the idea that Russia was likely, if she got possession of Constantinople, to make her way to India and overthrow English power in that country, was a phantom that

had really nothing in it; and I think they have found out also that the danger of the possession of a free passage through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles by Russia was one which England need not be afraid of.' With regard to some of the recent events, Mr. Bright affirmed that 'the only persons in this country who have been able to close their eyes and their ears are Her Majesty's Ministers.' They had shown themselves virtually pro-Turk, and the time had come when our negotiations on this Eastern question must be framed upon new lines, with fresh principles and with a better policy. Having described the rising of the Christians in some of the Turkish provinces, the speaker declared amid applause that it had been followed by 'another rising, and an important one—the rising of the people of England.' As to our future policy, 'Let us lead; I have no objection if we can lead in a policy of mercy and freedom. Let us dissolve partnership with a power which curses every land that is subject to it. One of our poets has said, and said truly—

> "Byzantines boast that on the clod,
> Where once their Sultan's horse has trod,
> Grows neither grass, nor shrub, nor tree."

There is no doubt whatever that desolation and ruin are lasting memorials of the Moslem power on the once fertile shores of the Mediterranean.'

Dealing, in conclusion, with Mr. Disraeli's speech at Aylesbury, and the demand for an autumn session, Mr. Bright observed:—

'I say that the speech delivered the other day at Aylesbury was a speech of defiance to the people of England, a speech heartless and cruel as respects Servia and Bulgaria. (*Hear, hear.*) There is a demand for an autumn session. I believe nobody is more opposed to an autumn session than a member of Parliament is—(*laughter*); but though it is full of inconvenience, still the demand for it seems to me at this time constitutional and wise. Ministers are at variance, and the Prime Minister in his speech defies the country. If there was a dissolution now, what would happen? I suspect the Ministers would fear it greatly. They would be swept off the boards, and in their place a new policy and a new Ministry would be installed. I think the chief who made that speech—a speech which I deeply regret, and I think by this time he must also have regretted it—would by that public opinion be swept from his pride of place and from his place of power. Let him meet Parliament, or let him meet the constituencies; I am not afraid of what would be the decision of the country. (*Cheers.*) We regret, the country regrets, our past policy with regard to the Turkish question. We regret, the country regrets, the sacrifices of the Crimean War. We are not now anxious to go to war to defend the Turk, and we are not called upon and do not intend to go to war to defend the enemies of the Turk. We are at a long distance from that part of the world. It is no business of ours to be sending ships and troops nearly three thousand miles to effect territorial changes in which we have no real and no direct in-

terest. If we left it to the course of nature—nature as explained to us by historic facts—the question would no doubt some way settle itself. But if we had a Parliament, or a dissolution and a general election, the policy of England would in my opinion be declared; and I freely state to you my judgment that we should have this solemn and irrevocable decision on the part of the people of this country—that the blood and the treasure of England shall never again be wasted on behalf of the Turk—(*cheers*)—that the vote of our Government, the vote of England, in the Parliament of Europe, shall be given in favour of justice and freedom to Christian and Moslem alike—(*cheers*)—and that the Ottoman power shall be left hereafter to the fate which Providence has decreed to corruption, tyranny, and wrong.' (*Great cheering.*)

In a letter to a correspondent, Mr. Bright also advocated an autumn session of Parliament, and it was generally believed that had such a step been taken at this time, it would have resulted in a disastrous defeat of the Government. But Lord Beaconsfield did not dissolve Parliament, and as events wore on they operated favourably rather than otherwise to the continuance and popularity of his Government.

On the 1st of November Turkey agreed to an armistice of six weeks, and on the following day the Emperor Alexander gave our ambassador at St. Petersburg, Lord A. Loftus, the most solemn assurances that he had no designs upon Constantinople. Speaking at Moscow on the 10th, with a knowledge of Lord Beaconsfield's utterances at the Ministerial banquet at the Mansion House on the preceding day, the Czar said that if Russia could not obtain such guarantees as were necessary for carrying out what she had a right to demand from the Porte, she was prepared to act independently. A Conference was now called at Constantinople of special representatives of the six great European Powers, for the purpose of settling the affairs of the Ottoman Empire; and the Marquis of Salisbury was nominated the Queen's Special Ambassador at this Conference.

While the Marquis was upon his travels, Mr. Bright delivered a great speech to his constituents at Birmingham, on the 4th of December. The meeting was convened by the Liberal Association for the purpose of expressing an opinion upon the Eastern policy of the Government; and a resolution was carried calling upon the Government to unite with Russia and the other great Powers in securing the independence of the Christian provinces of European Turkey. Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Muntz, the other members for the borough, were also present.

Mr. Bright briefly recapitulated the principal events of the past year, and inquired why war was considered imminent, when every Government in Europe was in favour of peace.

The answer was, because England was determined, by means of Turkey, to keep the Russian ships of war out of the Mediterranean. He ridiculed the idea of there being any danger to English interests in the presence of a Russian navy in that sea. The vessels of other nations were permitted there, and the skies would not fall if Russia was admitted. She was excluded by frost from passing from the Baltic during half the year, and throughout the whole year from passing the Dardanelles, because Turkey held the keys for England. If England were in such a position, the unanimous voice of the nation would claim the right for her vessels to enter the Mediterranean. He urged that Great Britain should join Russia in urging reforms upon Turkey; and if she could not do that, let her stand aside. 'There can be no arbitration,' he said, 'unless the parties to the dispute are willing; there can be no arbitration between such a Government as that which reigns in Constantinople, and the suffering people of whom we have lately heard so much. I only take consolation in the fact, during all these tremendous scenes of suffering—

> "That God from evil still educes good;
> Sublime events are rushing to their birth;
> Lo! tyrants by their victims are withstood,
> And Freedom's seed still grows, though steeped in blood."

Let us hope, let us pray, that the efforts that are being made, as sincerely by the Emperor of Russia as by the Government of this country, may be crowned with success, and that the storm which has been created, and which threatened to rage around us, may be put an end to, and that tranquillity may again speedily prevail.'

Referring to the Conference, and to our Special Ambassador to Constantinople, Mr. Bright remarked:

'Lord Salisbury is a man against whom a good deal may be said, and a good deal may be honestly said in his favour; perhaps that is true of most of us—(*laughter*); but with regard to his policy at home I think I have observed in it for many years—and I have watched and sat opposite to him for years in the House of Commons—what I shall call a haughty unwisdom that was unfortunate and mischievous. On the other hand, I have seen in his conduct as Minister for India great liberality, and a great disposition to do that which he believed to be just. I can only hope that he leaves the unwisdom for home consumption—(*laughter*).—and that when he arrives in Constantinople his liberality and his justice will have fair play. I hope that he will do his country the highest service, and himself the highest honour, by the duty which he has undertaken. But now the special ambassador has been to Paris, to Berlin, to Vienna, and to Rome; he has seen the Duc Decazes, he has seen Prince Bismarck, he has seen Count Andrassy, he has seen Signor Melegari at Rome; he has heard what they have had to say. If he has been touting for allies

and sympathizers, I expect that by this time he knows he has really failed to find them. (*Hear, hear.*) If he will act upon his own strong sense, it may do us great good; if he acts as the subservient representative of his chief—(*groans and hisses*)—judging his chief by his own language, then I think he may do us very serious ill.'

Conferences, Mr. Bright reminded his hearers, had not always ended in peace. Alluding to the Premier's boast at the Guildhall as to how many campaigns England could bear before she was exhausted, he described it as greatly out of place. Cheers and laughter followed the observation that 'the Prime Minister may be a great actor, but somehow or other it seems to me as though he always played to the gallery.' Mr. Bright then quoted M. Guizot, Lord Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, and Mr. Cobden in support of his own views on the Crimean War. There was nothing in the whole political pamphlet literature of the country to compare with the pamphlets which Mr. Cobden had written more than thirty years before. One of these, on 'Russia, Turkey, and England,' was being reprinted. There could be nothing so helpful and useful to read at the present time. 'The lover of freedom,' said the right hon. gentleman in conclusion, 'always looks to us; the oppressed everywhere turn their eyes to ask for sympathy and for help from us. They feel that they make this claim upon a free people. We not only do not deny that claim, but we freely acknowledge it. Well, then, I will put to you a solemn question—a question which you must answer, and you must answer it to your children—to your posterity: Shall the might of England again be put forth to sustain such a tyranny as that which rules in Constantinople—a tyranny which has dried up realms to deserts; a tyranny which throughout all its wide range and influence has blasted for centuries past with its withering breath all that is lovely and beautiful in nature, and all that is noble and exalted in man? I ask you, Mr. Chairman, I ask this meeting of my countrymen, I ask every man in the three kingdoms—and in this case may I not ask every woman—what will be the answer given to this question?—and I dare undertake to say there can be only one universal answer from the generous heart of the English people.'

The entire audience responded enthusiastically to Mr. Bright's appeal.

On the 8th of December a National Conference on the Eastern Question was held in St. James's Hall. The Duke of Westminster presided at the afternoon meeting, and the Earl of Shaftesbury in the evening. The speakers at the meetings

included Mr. Gladstone, Sir G. Campbell, Mr. Anthony Trollope, Mr. Evelyn Ashley, Canon Liddon, Sir H. Havelock, Mr. Trevelyan, Professor Fawcett, and Mr. Freeman. An expression used by the last-named gentleman subsequently excited much comment. 'Will you fight for the integrity and independence of the empire of Sodom?' he asked. 'Perish the interests of England, perish our dominions in India, sooner than that we should strike one blow or speak one word on behalf of the wrong against the right.' Mr. Thomas Carlyle wrote a letter to the originators of the Conference, expressing his high admiration for the Russian national character and policy, and his belief that the expulsion of the Turk from Europe, though a somewhat drastic remedy, was yet the only hopeful one.

The Constantinople Conference was held in due course, but its sittings proved abortive. On the 20th of January, 1877, the final meeting was held, when the representatives of the Great Powers declared that they must decline further intercourse with the Ottoman Government, the latter having rejected all proposals, even after their reduction to the lowest demands. In the following April Russia formally declared war against Turkey, and the conflict between the two Powers now began.

On the 25th of July, 1877, Mr. Bright unveiled the Cobden statue at Bradford; and in the evening the opportunity was taken of presenting him with an address in St. George's Hall. Reference was made in the address to some of the measures with which the right hon. gentleman's name was associated, and it was observed that 'although a great change had taken place in public opinion since the Crimean war, British interests and a spirited foreign policy are made in some quarters still the shadowy and dangerous pretext for departing from a strict and wise neutrality.' The address was read by Mr. Titus Salt.

The reply of Mr. Bright was confined almost exclusively to the Eastern question. Having sketched our vast empire, he showed how great must be our interests in the cause of peace. If we are at war, nearly half the world is at war, for England cannot go to war but every territory over which England rules is necessarily also at war with, for the time, the enemy of England. Yet there was always a war party, and it was found in the press constantly, as well as in Parliament. He asked his hearers to examine the two policies—the war policy and the peace policy. We escaped the war against Austria in 1859, and we also avoided war in the critical year following. In

1864 we ran an imminent risk of being engaged in the war between Germany and Denmark. We took no part in the Austro-German war of 1866, and we also avoided being dragged into the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. There was a war party in England during the time of the civil war in the United States; and if we had taken the side of the South, as we were urged by some to do, the American Republic would have been filled with a bitter hostility against this country for generations. He asked with regard to all these cases in which we had avoided war, 'Is there one single man in the United Kingdom outside Bedlam, and I doubt if there be one inside it, who regrets the course of neutrality which the people and the Government of the United Kingdom pursued?' But in 1853, when Turkey declared war against Russia, we pursued a different course. If war had been averted then, three-quarters of a million of men would have been saved from death, two or three hundred millions of treasure would not have been wasted, and in all probability we should have avoided the vast increase of the armies of the Continent which took place as the immediate consequence of that war. It was a grand line that Milton wrote in one of his grand sonnets when he said,

'For what can war but endless war still breed?'

and that war had bred indescribable loss and suffering to several of the nations of Europe.

At that time, continued Mr. Bright, there was great jealousy of Russia; and now in our own time the old influence had appeared again. The old peril had come round again, and we had to confront it in the best way possible. The Turk had been brought to trial by the Constantinople Conference. The verdict went against him, but there was no result, for there was no European concert. The course pursued by England, as represented by her Government, made European concert absolutely impossible. If we were not willing to enforce the verdict, we might at any rate have stood aside and left Turkey to her fate. Russia had now undertaken to enforce the verdict; and assuming that the Conference was wise and its verdict righteous, it seemed only in accordance with reason and with logic that somebody should enforce it. Russia stepped forward to defend the Christian populations, and to put down evils and disturbances and oppressions which had become intolerable in the sight of all Europe. Because of that 'ghastly phantom, the balance of power,' the English Government now said that Russia must not approach Constantinople. Yet,

surely, to occupy the capital city of an empire or kingdom at war was the speediest mode of bringing that war to a conclusion.

Having given several illustrations of the evil effects of the balance-of-power theory, Mr. Bright replied to the argument that the Russian fleet coming from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean would not be very far off the Suez Canal, and might interfere with the trading traffic and the military traffic between this country and our dependencies in India. There was no more reason to believe that Russia would interfere with the Canal than that France would interfere with it. The Russians had not invaded the east coast of England from the Baltic. There was no country in Europe that, until these vile suspicions were aroused, was more disposed to a perpetual amity with England than the great Empire of Russia. He believed with regard to the Suez Canal that it was in more risk from the Turk than anybody else; and all Europe would gladly enter into any kind of reasonable compact to guarantee its improvement, its being widened, and its being kept perpetually open for all the mercantile and other navies of the globe. He believed also that all nations, ourselves excepted, would be quite willing to see the straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean just as freely opened. When they considered the disadvantageous position of Russia, it was one of the most unjust ideas, and one of the very wildest of unstatesmanlike notions that England could perpetually forbid a nation of 80,000,000 of people to find that access to the main ocean which the Creator of the world made equally for all His people upon the globe.

As to the course then being pursued, Mr. Bright said that while Lord Salisbury was endeavouring to bring the Turk to make concessions, the war party in England was speaking with another voice, stimulating and encouraging the Turk to resist, and it had brought him to that catastrophe in which he found himself. The sending of the fleet to Besika Bay, and other acts, showed that the English Government either did not fully understand the effects of their own acts, or that they behaved in a manner showing almost no confidence in the public opinion of their country. The records of the Stock Exchange proved this, and our merchants and manufacturers, and others, had a right to call upon the Government for a distinct enunciation of their policy. The Government no doubt had many difficulties to contend with, but they might at least have tamed down what he would call the rowdy organs of their press.

Neutrality, Mr. Bright urged, was the true and wise policy for this country. 'Five years hence, if this matter be settled, and we do not interfere, we shall all be delighted that we did not interfere. Five years hence, if we do interfere, we shall lament for the dead whose blood has been sacrificed, for the treasure that has been wasted, for the added discord which we have brought to Europe, and, it may be, for the humiliation of our statesmanship and our military operations that we may have to undertake. Let us, then, I say, turning to our foreign policy, be as wise as we are endeavouring to be with our home policy. Let us try to be courteous to all nations, just to all nations—as far as we can, getting rid of the jealousies that have disturbed us; let us believe that whether it be the United States on the other side of the Atlantic, or whether it be the great Empire of Russia in the east of Europe, that there are good, and great, and noble men in those countries; that there is no disposition whatever—as I believe there is none—to make quarrels with this country, and to do evil of any kind to us. Then, great as our nation is, with its power apparent in every quarter of the globe, great will be its influence for good; and though the world moves on slowly—far too slowly for our ardent hopes—to its brighter day, history will declare with impartial voice that Britain, casting off her ancient errors, led the grand procession of the nations in the path of civilization and of peace.'

The fortunes of war went disastrously against the Turks; and after the surrender of Plevna, on the 10th of December, a circular note was addressed by the Porte to the Great Powers, requesting mediation.

On the 13th of January, 1878, Mr. Bright addressed his constituents at Birmingham. In consequence of the session of Parliament beginning at an unusually early period, this date had been fixed for the usual visit of the members for the borough.

Mr. Bright's speech was again almost exclusively confined to the Eastern question. He remarked that the early summoning of Parliament, which in ordinary circumstances would be viewed with indifference, was now regarded with anxiety and alarm. There was no doubt that the country during the recess had been strongly agitated, and that the question upon which it had been disturbed was that of peace or war. He believed it would be criminal for the Ministry to involve this country in war. Experience had taught us that for the past two centuries all our wars, and the bloodshed, the loss of life they had entailed, had been undertaken for the pursuit of some ghastly phantom

or some cunning phrase. He trusted that the nation would not allow itself to embark again in war for a mere phrase, such as 'British interests,' and he held with Lord Derby that the greatest of British interests was that of peace. The right hon. gentleman pointed out that everything we obtained by the Crimean war was given up the moment the next European complication arose. The conclusion of his speech, in which he enforced these points, was as follows :—

'It is a painful and terrible thing to think how easy it is to stir up a nation to war. Take up any decent history of this country, from the time of William III. until now—for two centuries, or nearly so,—and you will find that wars are always supported by a class of arguments which, after the war is over, the people find were arguments they should not have listened to. It is just so now, for unfortunately there still remains the disposition to be excited on these questions. Some poet, I forget which it is, has said,

> "Religion, freedom, vengeance, what you will,
> A word's enough to raise mankind to kill;
> Some cunning phrase by faction caught and spread,
> That guilt may reign, and wolves and worms be fed."

"Some cunning phrase by faction caught and spread," like the cunning phrase of "the balance of power," which has been described as the ghastly phantom that the Government of this country has been pursuing for two centuries, and has not yet overtaken. (*Hear, hear.*) Some cunning phrase like that we have now of "British interests." Lord Derby said the wisest thing that has been uttered by any member of this Administration during the discussions on this war, when he said that the greatest of British interests is peace. (*Cheers.*) And a hundred, far more than a hundred, public meetings have lately said the same; and millions of households of men and women have thought the same. To-night we shall say "Amen" to this wise declaration. (*Cheers.*) I am delighted to see this grand meeting in this noble Town Hall. This building is consecrated to peace and to freedom. You are here in your thousands, representing the countless multitudes outside. May we not to-night join our voices in this resolution, that, so far as we are concerned, the sanguinary record of the history of our country shall be closed; that we will open a new page on which shall henceforth be inscribed only the blessed message of mercy and of peace?' (*Loud cheers.*)

Public feeling was intensified shortly afterwards by the resignation of the Earl of Derby and the Earl of Carnarvon—the two members of the Ministry who were known to be most strongly opposed to a war policy. At the close of January, the Government asked for a vote of credit, in view of the eventualities of war, when Mr. Bright complained of our entering the European Conference with 'shotted guns and revolvers.' Mr. Forster moved an amendment to the Ministerial proposition as follows: 'That this House, having been informed in Her Majesty's gracious speech that the conditions on which Her Majesty's neutrality is founded had not been infringed by either

belligerent engaged in the war in the east of Europe, and having since received no information sufficient to justify a departure from the policy of neutrality and peace, sees no reason for adding to the burdens of the people by voting unnecessary supplies.'

The debate lasted for five nights. Mr. Bright spoke on the first night to a crowded House. At the outset he declared that he did not intend to make any attack upon the Government, though they had within the last few months been guilty of much indecision, and had committed many blunders. But they had had much provocation from some of their own supporters, and it was at least to their credit that they had not been led away by the raving lunacy of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, or by what, if he might be pardoned for the alliteration, he would call the *delirium tremens* of the *Daily Telegraph*. Mr. Bright caused considerable amusement by his description of the delegates of the Sultan, who, he said, were 'scarcely to be found.' Their Government had telegraphed to them, and they had received no answer, although they had communicated with their wives—that being, Mr. Bright added in a parenthetical sentence, a Government which they seemed to comprehend. He deprecated the unworthy suspicion of Russia, and urged the Government not to throw their sword into the scale at a time the combatants appeared to be about to sheathe theirs. 'I would declare this,' he continued,—'the Government of this country ought to declare it—the time is not far distant, I believe, when they will declare it—I think it is now pretty much in the mind of the people of England—that we have no interest in any longer taking any step whatever to maintain the Ottoman rule in Europe, that we have no interest in cherishing a perpetual animosity against Russia. There are two policies before us—the old policy, which, if we leave it to our children, will be a legacy of future wars; the new policy, which I contend for, and which I preach, and which if we adopt we shall leave to our country, not a legacy of war, but a legacy of peace, and a growing and lasting friendship with one of the greatest empires of the globe.'

Sir Wilfrid Lawson introduced in the course of a speech which he made during this debate, the burden of a popular music-hall song, that resulted in fixing the name of 'Jingo' upon the war party—

> 'We don't want to fight; but, by Jingo, if we do,
> We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too.'

Mr. Lowe made merry over 'the vote of credit and the con-

fidence trick,' and said that the Prime Minister generally took pains to show that his opinion was at variance with that of the majority of the people. He suggested a simple remedy for the present difficulties—'Muzzle your Prime Minister.' Mr. Bourke and Mr. Hardy supported the vote in animated speeches, Sir. W. Harcourt remarking of the latter that he had shown the volcanic force of Cotopaxi, and Chimborazo in full flame. In the end, Mr. Forster's amendment was withdrawn, and the House decided to go into Committee by 295 votes to 96—many of the Opposition, Mr. Bright amongst the number, refraining from voting. Other discussions took place, but the vote of credit was eventually agreed to.

On the 3rd of March, a treaty of peace between Russia and Turkey was signed at San Stefano, and this was ratified at St. Petersburg on the 17th.

Great uneasiness, however, still continued to prevail in England in consequence of the attitude of the Government, and an order issued for the dispatch of Indian troops to Malta caused great excitement. The bye-elections at this period showed that the Ministerial policy was losing favour. Meetings and conferences were held all over the country; and at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, Mr. Gladstone was presented with an address, signed by four hundred Dissenting ministers, strongly deprecating the war with Russia with which the country was menaced.

At Manchester, on the 30th of April, a great Conference, composed of fifteen hundred delegates from cities, towns, and various organizations, assembled to protest against the impending war with Russia. Resolutions were passed strongly condemning the Government, and demanding a Congress, or a reference of the whole quarrel to a friendly Power.

Mr. Bright presided at a great demonstration held in the evening at the Free Trade Hall. He spoke with remarkable energy and vigour. They were met, he said, at a time of great peril and anxiety. When told that the Government were acting strenuously for peace, for his part he had very little sympathy with efforts on behalf of peace which naturally led to war. The right hon. gentleman went on to review the conduct of the Government in spending the six millions recklessly, after the Commons had been assured that they would probably not be spent at all. He blamed them for having determined on a policy which neither Lord Derby nor Lord Carnarvon could endure, though the former must have suffered terribly in separating himself from Lord Beaconsfield; for representing that

the fleet had been sent into the Sea of Marmora for the protection of British interests, when it was now acknowledged that it was sent there as a menace; for declaring before Parliament adjourned that nothing was about to happen, when they were about to import thousands of Mahometan soldiers to fight against the Christian nation of Russia; and for neglecting the House of Commons, which 'either dare not ask for information, or when it asks is denied.' The English Government was the only obstacle to the Congress. The 'British interests' dodge had been dropped, and we were to go to war for European law, which outside these islands nobody understood. The Premier was the only real disturber of the nation, and his object was to restore Turkey to sustain 'that terrible oppression, that multitudinous crime which we call the Ottoman Government.' England must not repeat the error of the Crimean war.

The prospect of Turkey suffering at the hands of Russia, said Mr. Bright, was said to present a danger through which England's interest might suffer. And on this 'perhaps,' a remote and imaginary evil, we were to go to war. 'It recalls to my mind a passage in one of our poets. He says,

> "On this *perhaps*—
> This peradventure, infamous for lies,
> We build our mountain hope, spin our eternal schemes."

If we had Mr. Hardy's policy and that of his Government, I fear we should rush into that enormous, that incalculable crime for which language has no word but one which conceals its meaning—but a crime which involves a multitudinous murder, the shedding of torrents of blood over many of the fairest regions of the globe. I ask you here—it may not be worth while to ask any Conservative here or outside: there must be Conservatives so-called who vote for Conservative candidates, who have, I trust, some idea beyond that of the mere superiority or success of party—there must surely be Conservatives, as there are any number of Liberals, who consider great national interests and great truths to be superior to the demands of party; and I ask them whether they will be led in this career and to this terrible catastrophe by a Minister—for I hold that I am not describing the policy of the country—I am not even describing the policy of Parliament—I may not even be describing the secret wished-for policy of the whole of the Cabinet; I am describing, as far as I can gather it, the policy of a Minister—a Minister who for forty years has never yet been known of his free-will, or from an earnest or liberal mind,

to say or do anything for the advance of any of those great measures of good and of freedom which have distinguished the legislation of this country.'

This spirited attack on Lord Beaconsfield elicited prolonged cheering from the audience. Resuming, Mr. Bright said that his consolation and hope was that the love of justice, of mercy, and of peace was not dead within the minds of Englishmen. 'I wish that it may grow and may strengthen from day to day; and that, growing and strengthening, it may baffle a policy which is hateful in the sight of Heaven, which to my mind is profoundly wicked, and which I feel certain beyond all possibility of doubt is a policy which is hostile to and may, if persisted in, be fatal to the greatest and highest interests of the empire.' In responding subsequently to a vote of thanks, Mr. Bright, again alluding to the proposed war upon the Christian population of Russia, said with great emphasis, 'for no such cause as this shall the torrents of English blood be called to flow, which are apparently now on the point of being shed at the command—I will say to the people, at the betrayal—of a Minister who has not one single drop of English blood in his veins.'

This was the last of Mr. Bright's important addresses upon the Eastern question. With the subsequent history of that question the reader is doubtless familiar. All that it is necessary, therefore, to say here is that the war fever in England, thanks to the energetic efforts of those who were opposed to the anti-Russian policy of the Government, gradually subsided. On the 13th of July, 1878, the Berlin Congress assembled, the representatives being Prince Bismarck, Prince Gortschakoff, Alexander Caratheodori, Lord Beaconsfield, the Marquis of Salisbury, Count Andrassy, M. Waddington, and Count Corti. A treaty was drawn up which provided, amongst other things, for the independency of Montenegro, Servia, and Roumania, the constitution of Bulgaria as an autonomous principality, the formation of the new province of Eastern Roumelia, the occupation and administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary, and the cession of Ardahan, Kars, and Batoum to Russia. The Treaty was signed and ratified on the 3rd of August. With the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty, that question which had cost Europe many costly and sanguinary wars was once more temporarily settled.

CHAPTER XII.

PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND CORRESPONDENCE—1867–79.—DEATH OF MRS. BRIGHT.

Mr. Bright's Addresses in the Provinces.—Mr. Jacob Bright's Return for Manchester.—Political Retrospect by Mr. Bright.—Speech at Birmingham on Education and Government Aid.—Mr. Bright receives the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh. His Address on that occasion.—Elected Honorary Member of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce.—Important Speech in the Corn Exchange.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham in January, 1875.—The Government and the Church.—The Efforts to Suppress Ritualism.—The Public Worship Bill.—Tribute to Mr. Gladstone.—Mr. Bright on the Liberal Defeat of 1874.—On Political Questions in the year 1875.—The direct Representation of Labour.—The Gothenburg System of Public-house Management.—Social Progress.—Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—A Stirring Week.—Mr. Bright on Household Suffrage for the Counties.—Speech at Bradford on Free Trade.—Opening of the New Town Hall at Manchester.—Mr. Bright on the Cotton Trade and Indian Administration.—Address at Rochdale on Science and Art.—On Liberal and Conservative Legislation.—On the Work of Sunday Schools.—Letter on Protection in America.—Correspondence on Public Questions.—Great Speech at Birmingham on Foreign Affairs.—The Eastern Question.—Egypt.—The War in Afghanistan.—The Government strongly condemned.—Mr. Bright on Protectionism in England.—On the Depression in Trade.—Canadian Policy.—Waning Popularity of the Beaconsfield Administration.—Conservative Demonstration at Manchester in October, 1879.—Great Counter-Demonstration by the Liberals.—Animated Speech by Mr. Bright.—Scathing Denunciation of the Government.—Mr. Bright on Education.—The Progress of the United States.—Death of Mrs. Bright.

We propose in this chapter to deal with a series of important addresses by Mr. Bright, all of which were delivered outside the House of Commons, and at many of the chief towns in the provinces—Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, Bradford, etc. The period embraced is a very interesting one, both in regard to social progress and the rapid development of popular principles in connection with Parliamentary Reform, Irish legislation, and other great subjects. These addresses are, moreover, not only very valuable for the side-lights which they throw upon the 'burning questions' of the time, but for their exposition of those ideas of Mr. Bright which have for a generation past been bearing fruit in the shape of practical legislation

The first of these addresses was delivered at Rochdale on the 23rd of December, 1867. On the 26th of the preceding month there had been an election for the city of Manchester, when Mr. Jacob Bright was returned by the large majority of 1,850 votes over Alderman Bennett. The numbers were—Bright, 8,260; Bennett, 6,409. A third candidate, Mr. Mitchell Henry, had practically withdrawn. The numbers polled for the successful Liberal candidate were larger than had ever been recorded at a contest in Manchester before. Although Mr. Bennett received the support of the Conservatives, his proposer disclaimed the idea that the candidate himself was a Conservative. The meeting held at Rochdale was called for the purpose of welcoming Mr. Jacob Bright after his election.

Beginning by congratulating his brother, and also the city of Manchester, on the recovery of its rightful position as regards the Liberal party, Mr. Bright went on to speak of the work of the Liberals. Madame de Staël had defined happiness as constant occupation for a desirable object, and with a sense of continual progress. Politically speaking, therefore, Liberals were amongst the happiest of mortals, for they had constant occupation with a sense of continual progress. The Tories were unhappily in a very different position. They had had constant employment, for during the last twenty-five years the Liberals had found them a great deal to do, but they had no desirable end in view, nor had they aided in any continual progress. Mr. Bright illustrated this by the attitude and action of the Tories at three memorable periods, 1832, 1846, and 1867. Mr. Mill had said the Tory party were naturally the stupid party; and unless they were so stupid that they could not easily feel, the retrospect must be exceedingly humiliating to them, and the future equally gloomy. But their last humiliation on Reform appeared to him to be the deepest of all. Lord Derby had always been regarded as the most faithful of Tories, though the proprietor of a Tory journal had once said to Mr. Bright that his lordship was not a thoroughbred Tory, he was only a 'broken-hair'd 'un.' From his career he was apparently a man to be trusted by his party; but if it were not melancholy, there could hardly be anything more amusing than the transformation scene which had just taken place in Parliament.

Amid great cheering, Mr. Bright went on to say: 'Even now, the insolence which Lord Derby has sometimes manifested in his speeches, the invective of Mr. Disraeli, the scurrilous vituperation of the Tory press—all this, poured upon me and others for years, has now been proved to be entirely a mistake.

In point of fact, it is discovered in the year 1867—and I think it ought to be chronicled with other great discoveries of the century, certainly of the year—that my principles all along have been entirely constitutional, and my course perfectly patriotic. It has been found this year that the man who alone was considered faithful to his party has hauled down his flag.' The right hon. gentleman proceeded to remark that when we had a satisfactory distribution of seats, and the machinery of the ballot, we should have a really democratic and popular House of Commons. When Lord Derby and his party acceded to office, they did not propose a Reform measure because they liked it, but to keep the party together, and to prevent their opponents from ejecting them from office.

'Their conduct in the pursuit of office reminds me of some lines which were published a good many years ago, and which never had a more exact application than when they describe the course of the Tory party last year. The poet in the *Rejected Addresses* says—

> "So when dog's-meat re-echoes thro' the street,
> Rush sympathetic dogs from their retreat,
> Beam with bright blaze their supplicating eyes,
> Sink their hind legs, ascend their joyful cries;
> Then, wild with hope, or maddening to prevail,
> Points the quick ear, and wags the expectant tail."

(*Loud laughter.*) Just so the gentlemen of the front Opposition benches, and such of them behind who thought that there was something to be had, were sure to act. Especially, and above all, was it the case with the lawyers, who have since been gorged with patronage, and for the sake of that patronage and plunder, which in India is called loot, formed a combination to overthrow the bill of 1866. To place themselves in office, and to keep themselves there, they consented to pass a bill infinitely worse on all the points for which they condemned the bill of 1866. I venture to say their conduct on this occasion leads to the conclusion that there is scarcely any institution of the country, however honourable and ancient, that they would not sell for the permanent possession of office. (*Cheers.*) . . . . To crown the whole thing, we have seen Lord Derby, the last defender of Protection, the last and firmest bulwark against democracy, —we have seen him exhibiting himself in defence of free trade and household suffrage on the platform of the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. Notwithstanding this, I suppose that our friends the Tories will still have faith, for their credulity is without limit, and still believe in him—they must believe in somebody,—and that Lord Derby will stand as a sort of saint in the political calendar of the Conservative party.' (*Cheers.*)

Mr. Bright next observed that the work of Reform was not yet completed; they must have what he had already mentioned —Redistribution and the Ballot. Then there was the question of Ireland to settle, which had remained unsettled for two hundred years. If the English Government had been a Government of statesmen, things could never have come to their present terrible pass. Ireland might have been tranquil, and

the kingdom might long ago have been united. 'If Ireland is to be made content, if her wounds are to be healed, if there is to be henceforth what there never yet has been—a united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland,—if the sceptre of the Queen, representing the majesty of the law, shall ever be of equal authority east and west of the Channel, this must be done, and this can only be done, by measures of great statesmanship and of justice. The morals of the turf, whether adopted on the floor of Parliament or in the secrecy of the Cabinet, will fail here. The disease which we are discussing is one of a different character. There are remedies, unless it be that the remedies are too late. Has this country fallen so low that it can produce no statesman equal to these things? I say the man who, leading the counsels of the Queen's Government, shall grasp this great question and conclude it—who shall comprehend the remedies, shall administer them, and shall make them law—will do that which in future time the pen of history will delight to trace. He will to the very full gratify the noblest ambition of his mind, and he will build up for himself a lasting memorial in the happiness and the gratitude of a regenerated nation.'

On the 5th of February, 1868, Mr. Bright attended a breakfast given by Mr. J. S. Wright, the Chairman of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, to the artisans who had, at the instance of the Society of Arts, visited the Paris Exhibition. The Mayor of Birmingham presided. In the course of the proceedings, some of the speakers expressed their alarm at the risks which they believed English manufacturers were running from the rivalry of foreigners, and they urged that Government should give assistance, by public grants, to technical education. Mr. Bright said he had always predicted that with a fair representation of the people there would come a demand for national education, and his prediction had been verified, for there was an excitement on the subject greater than had existed in any previous time. He was afraid he should have to throw a little cold water upon some of the things that were being advocated, but he did not believe in everything being done by the Government. He would not ask the Government, either by grants or by rates, to do anything for public education except for that class of the people who were in deplorable ignorance. The mass of the labouring population was not in a satisfactory condition as regards education—it was beneath the same class in Prussia, Switzerland, and America. All above this class had ample means of educating their own children, and there was no necessity to apply

to Government for them. With regard to technical education, those specially gifted must naturally become the leaders in the various arts and manufactures, and in his opinion it would not be necessary to have much of what was called technical training for particular trades. There had been little of strict technical education in the United States, and yet no nation in the world had surpassed them in the progress made in manufacturing intelligence. This was because there was no class of the people that was not sufficiently educated to be able to read and to comprehend and to think; and this was the foundation of all subsequent progress. In the United States there was not a great and idle class on the one hand, and a great poor and depressed class on the other. Mr. Bright maintained that if we were to establish throughout the country a system of primary education, simple but sound, and give to the people the power to read and to think, we should lay a broad and great foundation from which would arise almost all else that we want. Mr. Cobden had said that the Prussians were the Yankees of Europe, and from their education he believed they would be the most powerful nation in Europe, because they had to a very large extent followed the system of universal education existing in the United States. There was no occasion to go to Government for art and trade museums for such towns as Birmingham, Manchester, and Sheffield. Having worked as they had worked in Birmingham for the last hundred years in building up the town and its industry, it was monstrous to say there was not public spirit enough and wealth enough to procure for Birmingham anything necessary to teach manufactures and art, and that particular kind of technical instruction required. With regard to the subject of education generally, he thought that in endeavouring to extend the means of education for the people, they should go on rather with a steady wisdom than with such a precipitate and feverish action as might raise great difficulties in the path. He hoped that by this means they would come to the time when every boy and girl would receive a sound education.

The freedom of the city of Edinburgh was presented to Mr. Bright on the 3rd of November, 1868. The Lord Provost, Mr. W. Chambers, the well-known educational publisher, made the presentation, and in doing so referred to the necessity of supplementing Parliamentary Reform by the promotion of a comprehensive scheme of national education, without which all other blessings were nugatory.

After remarking upon the great value which he put upon

such a presentation, as a mark of approbation of his public conduct from the most intelligent and renowned city in the United Kingdom, Mr. Bright disclaimed being an orator except in the sense in which Milton described true eloquence, as nothing but the serious and hearty love of truth. Nor had he any desire to be considered a statesman, for he had seen much of intrigue, and ambition, and selfishness in the characters of so many so-called statesmen. He had been content to describe himself as a simple citizen, who honestly examined such public questions as affected the public weal, and honestly offered his counsels to his countrymen. Referring to the exertions he had made in company with Mr. Cobden for the repeal of the Corn Laws, he said: 'When I look back to him whose name must ever be foremost in any history or memory of that struggle—when I consider his remarkable industry, his wonderful sagacity, his enlarged information, the combined force and gentleness of his character, his most persuasive speech—when I look back upon his transcendent merits—I confess that I am amazed that it took all that, and the energy, and the labour, and the resolution of hundreds and thousands besides, to repeal the Corn Laws. I say I am amazed that on so clear a question it should be necessary to make so great an effort to bring Parliament and the people to comprehend their true interests.' Upon questions of statesmanship he remarked, 'I am one of those who have never believed that there is anything very mysterious in the art or knowledge of politics; I believe that, with regard to what we call statesmanship—honest statesmanship—it is not an abstruse and a difficult branch of knowledge; and that if, when we come to consider a public question, we were able to strip it of all the things that do not really belong to it, and to get at the pith and kernel of the matter, our intellects are so much on a par, and that as a whole we are so anxious to act honestly and rightly, that nearly on all occasions we should be able to come to an early and a wise agreement as to the course which the public should pursue.'

On the question of the Russian war, Mr. Bright remarked, 'I always said that no country justice—and there are some of them who are not very particular—(*laughter*)—would send any man to gaol for three months on evidence such as the people of England—I beg pardon of the gentleman in Glasgow who writes to me on the subject—I mean the people of Great Britain and Ireland—had for that unhappy struggle. The result was that 250,000 men died or were killed in the course of that conflict, that hundreds of millions of treasure created by the nations

engaged were squandered, that the armaments all over Europe and in this country have been maintained at a higher rate ever since, that we in this country have found our military armaments increasing by £10,000,000 a year, and £10,000,000 in twenty years comes to £200,000,000, besides the sum spent in the war itself. And after all this we find that there is still a great Eastern question, that Russia is stronger than ever, for Russia has manumitted her serfs, and that Turkey is not stronger, but weaker, from the efforts made to save her.'

In reference to education, Mr. Bright clearly indicated his opinion that the question of religious teaching should not be mixed up with it. The Reform question, he said, could not be allowed to remain where it was, and the Irish question, including the land, must be dealt with. Touching upon the freedom of the press, Mr. Bright said that a free press was just as necessary for political liberty as free air for our natural lives; and he thus concluded his address: 'The century in which we live, the middle of which we have passed, is one that has been remarkable for the eventfulness of its changes, and so it will be regarded in all future time. There is a great battle going on at this moment, and, without exaggeration, we may say that it is a battle with confused noise, although it is not a battle which the prophet described as "with garments rolled in blood." There is a confused noise throughout the country, from John O'Groat's to the Land's-end. All over Great Britain and over Ireland men are discussing high questions—questions which are to affect the unity of the empire, our own condition, the condition of the posterity that are to follow us, and to colour all the narratives of the future historians of this kingdom. Let us then in this battle of discussion bear our part; let us avoid heat and passion as much as we can; let us strip from all these subjects that which does not belong to them; let us grasp with all our might the true meaning of them; and let us honestly endeavour to find a true solution for whatever difficulties beset the path of the nation. I am thankful beyond what I can express, when I review my political life, that I have been permitted to bear some part in changes the results of which will act, I trust, beneficially for ever.'

On the 3rd of November Mr. Bright was elected an honorary member of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. Mr. George Harrison, Chairman of the Chamber, congratulated Mr. Bright on being thus elected, and stated that he was only the third person upon whom this distinction had been conferred. His predecessors were Sir John Sinclair, the well-known political

economist of the last century, and Mr. Gladstone, of the present. Mr. Bright, in acknowledging the honour done to him, spoke at some length. The chief feature of his speech was the recommendation that the Chamber should take part in an agitation for the repeal of the taxes on tea and sugar. The cry he would raise would be 'An untaxed breakfast table.'

In the evening Mr. Bright received addresses from the Trades Delegates and the Reform League at the Corn Exchange. The great building was crammed, and many persons to whom tickets had been sold could not obtain admission. The ladies' gallery was splendidly occupied, and the compact crowd occupying the ground floor and south platform formed an animated and imposing spectacle. Mr. Grant Duff, M.P., occupied the chair; and, besides many distinguished persons connected with the city and the university, the following members of Parliament were present: Mr. James Moncreiff, Lord William Hay, Sir Robert Anstruther, Mr. R. Dalglish, the Hon. Waldegrave Leslie, Mr. Duncan Maclaren, and Mr. Miller.

Mr. Bright, who was received with enthusiasm, the entire audience standing and cheering, spoke for rather more than an hour, dwelling mainly upon the land question, and the questions of national expenditure and national education. The speech was one of his best efforts. The exordium was a brief but comprehensive sketch of how the Tories, who had opposed any lowering of the franchise, had consented to household suffrage. Englishmen were standing on the threshold of a new career, for the power which had hitherto ruled over us was shifted. 'The fate of this great nation is in the nation's hands; come weal, come woe, the responsibility of the future must rest with the mass of the people;' for they are now 'admitted, at least within the boroughs, to a large share of representation, and thereby of political power.' Mr. Bright observed that the working men could not now say they were overridden by a class. They could exert their strength, and it was for them to exert it for good. There were some matters still to be adjusted, and prominent amongst these was the question of the ballot. He replied to Mr. Stuart Mill's argument in comparing the free and open exercise of the ballot to the duty of a judge in a court of justice, which is open to the public eye. If, instead of stopping at the Bench, said Mr. Bright, Mr. Mill had gone into the jury-room, he would have found that the jury, which is just as important in this country in a trial as the judge, does sit apart from the public eye; and more than that, that it is considered a gross violation of confidence if any juryman should convey to

the public a knowledge of what has occurred in the jury-room. Looking at the condition of the constituencies in Ireland, in Wales, and in the United Kingdom generally, he was forced to the conclusion that the ballot was absolutely indispensable and necessary to secure order as well as liberty.

Perfect religious equality in Ireland was the next point insisted upon by Mr. Bright, and from this he passed on to the great and necessary reform in the land system. Before long it would be the duty of the people of England and of Parliament to remove from the statute-book what was called the law of primogeniture. On the question of public expenditure he spoke very strongly. 'I quoted a passage yesterday from perhaps the foremost name in English political history—John Milton—and I may now quote another. He describes these charges for war as draining the veins of the body to supply ulcers; and so from your veins, from the sweat of your brows, from the skill of your brains and the industry of your hands, from that which you have worked for to furnish your houses, to clothe your families, to supply their wants—from all these this £26,000,000 is gathered up, not once in a hundred years, but every year, to support the army and navy, to maintain and keep up a policy which we have utterly abandoned. The third great question upon which the enlarged electorate should make itself heard was that of national education, and he warmly advocated a thorough system of education apart altogether from religious teaching. Mr. Bright closed his address with this passage, which is amongst the most striking and eloquent of his perorations:—

'Since I have taken a part in public affairs, the fact of the vast weight of the poverty and ignorance that exists at the bottom of the social scale has been a burden on my mind, and is so now. I have always hoped that the policy which I have advocated, and which has been accepted in principle—(*applause*)—will tend gradually but greatly to relieve the pauperism and the suffering which we still see among the working classes of society. I have no notion of a country being called prosperous and happy, or of being in a satisfactory state, when such a condition of things exists. You may have an historical monarchy, decked out in the dazzling splendour of royalty; you may have an ancient nobility, settled in grand mansions and on great estates; you may have an ecclesiastical hierarchy, hiding with its worldly pomp that religion whose first virtue is humility—(*cheers;*) but, notwithstanding all this, the whole fabric may be rotten, and doomed ultimately to fall, if the great mass of the people on whom it is supported is poor, and suffering, and degraded. (*Loud cheers.*)

'Is there no remedy for this state of things? If Government were just, if taxes were moderate and equitably imposed, if land were free, if schools were as prominent institutions in our landscapes and in our great towns as prisons and workhouses are, I suspect that we should find the people gradually gaining more self-respect; that they would have much more hope of improvement

for themselves and their families, that they would rise above, in thousands of cases, all temptations to intemperance, and that they would become generally —I say almost universally—more virtuous and more like what the subjects of a free State ought to be. (*Applause.*) The solemn question as to the future condition of a considerable portion of the labouring classes in this country cannot be neglected. It must be known and remedied. It is the work upon which the new electoral body and the new Parliament will have to enter. It is a long way from Belgrave Square to Bethnal Green. It is not pleasant to contrast the palatial mansions of the rich and the dismal hovels of the poor, the profuse and costly luxuries of the wealthy with the squalid and hopeless misery of some millions of those who are below them. But I ask you, as I ask myself a thousand times, is it not possible that this mass of suffering and poverty may be reached and be raised, or taught to raise itself? (*Hear, hear.*) What is there that man cannot do if he tries? The other day he descended to the mysterious depths of the ocean, and with an iron hand sought, and found, and grasped, and brought up to the surface the lost cable, and with it made two worlds into one. (*Loud cheers.*) I ask, are his conquests confined to the realms of science? Is it not possible that another hand, not of iron, but of Christian justice and kindness, may be let down into moral depths even deeper than the cable fathoms, to raise up from thence the sons and daughters of misery, and the multitude who are ready to perish? (*Applause.*) This is the great problem that is now before us. It is one which is not for statesmen only, not for preachers of the Gospel only,—it is one which every man in the nation should attempt to solve. The nation is now in power; and if wisdom abide with power, the generation to follow may behold the glorious day of what we, in our time, with our best endeavours, can only hope to see the earliest dawn.' (*Great cheering.*)

The members for Birmingham, Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz, addressed a great meeting of their constituents in Bingley Hall, on the 25th of January, 1875. The usual resolution of confidence was opposed, so far as Mr. Muntz was concerned, by the Good Templars and their allies. An amendment was moved, but the speakers could not be heard, and when the vote was taken a shout of cheers and derisive laughter greeted the feeble support which the amendment received. The vote of confidence was then put and carried by an overwhelming majority.

Mr. Bright spoke at considorable length. Referring to the accession of the Conservatives to power, he said he had been asked, as an old stager in Parliamentary matters, how he thought the new Government would get on, and he answered they would get on for a good while pretty well if they would keep off politics. But it was not easy to do this; for while recently on the shores of the Pentland Firth, he had seen from the papers that the Duke of Richmond and the Lord Chancellor in one House, and the Prime Minister in the other, had been engaged in applying a match to every bit of gunpowder they found in their way. First of all, they dealt with the Church of Scotland, and they had raised something like a new and great question in Scot-

land. There was every likelihood that, in the future elections for Scotland, the question of disestablishment would come up as a great and main question before almost every constituency in that kingdom. Then there was the English bill, introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was nourished and cherished by the Lord Chancellor and Lord Shaftesbury. In the House of Commons it was even more popular than in the Lords. Now he never knew the House of Commons unanimous and enthusiastic about a thing except at a time when it did not know what it was doing and where it was going. He had known it thus twice enthusiastic and almost unanimous—once when Lord John Russell brought in his Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, which everybody now wished to forget, and again upon the declaration of war with Russia, which many now believed was a very unpatriotic and evil thing. As to the Archbishop's bill, the Premier tacked himself to the Archbishop's apron, and the bill passed the House. It was charged against some thousands of the clergy of the Church of England that their conduct was lawless, and that they required to be curbed. Things, then, had come to a very serious pass, when men upon whose consecrated heads the hands of the bishop had been placed should require special legislation to punish or to curb them. Now in a great body like the Church of England there must always be a considerable divergence of opinion; yet one of the great arguments in favour of the Established Church was that it repressed all zeal which tended to disorder; and not only repressed zeal, but that it was a bulwark against that Church from which our fathers separated three hundred years ago. There was much anger over this zeal creeping into the Church. 'It crept into the Scotch Church about thirty years ago. At that time the fermentation was so violent that the hoops of the hogshead gave way, and the staves tumbled together, and there was an immeasurable quantity of sound ecclesiastical liquor lost. The very same thing is now happening, to a certain extent, in the Church of England.' Sir William Harcourt had suggested that we could turn out those men who did not conform, and we could put others in their places who would obey—he did not say their consciences or the law of God—but the national faith. 'I doubt if he will find it very easy to procure pious and earnest and learned men to take these offices on the kind of terms which he offers in this language that I have quoted. I think he must have forgotten somewhat the rock from which he was hewn, and he must be thinking more of the profession to which he is now attached.' It was quite true that the Gov-

ernment did order what should be the uniform of the Truth, but their Acts of Parliament could not touch the hearts and reason and consciences of men. They might rely upon it that, with a vast number of the clergy of the Church of England, any attempt to bind them down in a sort of strait-waistcoat of this kind, though it might appear to have a temporary success, must ultimately and wholly fail. Zeal would not for all time sacrifice freedom, even to keep the emoluments and dignities of a State Church. He was not defending the new manners, the new practices, and the new opinions; he had no sympathy with them whatsoever; but he was endeavouring to show that the course which the Government had entered upon was a perilous course.

Mr. Bright next referred to a case which had just caused considerable excitement—that wherein the Bishop of London had refused to allow the word 'reverend' to be inscribed on the tombstone of a Wesleyan minister; and he asked whether if it were wrong to find so much fault with those outside the Church, it might not be well and wise to try to arrest the mischief which was so obviously spreading inside. There was strife between the clergy and the bishops, and there was also great discord between the bishops themselves. A colonial bishop—Bishop Colenso—had been forbidden to occupy a pulpit in Oxford to which he had been invited by a brother clergyman; but although the bishop of the diocese could prevent the appearance of Dr. Colenso, he could not prevent his sermon from being read from his friend's pulpit. The colonial bishop had further been invited to preach in Westminster Abbey, but not wishing to promote disorder he had declined the invitation. Such grievances as these had suggested the bill of last year. But the Public Worship Bill was mere trifling. It made no alteration in the law. It did not decide what was the law. It simply provided a new court to which aggrieved parishioners might go. It might deal with the question of the light that comes from the candles, but it could not deal with the question of the light which came from the eloquence, the earnestness and power, and godly sincerity of the man who preaches. The fact was that the State Church, as we had it now, was not and could not be in harmony with the age. Politically it had rendered no service, and as a religious institution they found that the excessive emoluments at one end of the scale, and the scanty and inadequate remuneration at the other, were altogether a disgrace to a great national institution. Promotion, too, in the Church was promotion through interest and importunity. There were also the evils connected with patronage. It was not from the Wes-

leyans, Congregationalists, and Baptists that complaints were made of a certain percentage of ministers and people going over to Rome; it was only from the hierarchical and prelatic Church that converts were continually made.

Referring to the Church Defence Association, on whose behalf Lord Dartmouth had recently presided at a meeting, and to a meeting of licensed victuallers presided over by Mr. Wadhams, Mr. Bright said: 'Mr. Wadhams and his friends take exactly the same course that Lord Dartmouth and his friends take. They are very petulant, they are very bad-tempered, and they are apt to call names. They say that the temperance people want to ruin all the publicans, and it is a dreadful thing that some should propose—which is, perhaps, the next probable assault—that public-houses should be shut up on Sunday. These two bodies—Lord Dartmouth and his friends, and Mr. Wadhams and his friends—are in possession each of them of a monopoly.' Now he did not recommend that meeting, or any constituency, that they should pledge their candidates to vote for the abolition of the Established Church. That question had not come near the front yet. It was one of the gravest questions a people ever had to consider.

Mr. Bright next proceeded to pay a high-toned and sympathetic tribute to Mr. Gladstone, who had temporarily abandoned the position of leader of the Liberal party. 'They who have seen him,' he remarked, 'for very many years in the House of Commons as I have—they who have sat with him, and seen him in the counsels of the Cabinet—they only are able justly to estimate the magnitude of the loss which the House of Commons and the country have sustained by his withdrawal. I will say nothing in answer to ungenerous things that have been said of him. Of this I am well aware, that Mr. Gladstone, like an old and a noble Roman, can be content with deserving the praises of his country, even though some of his countrymen should deny them to him.' In conclusion, Mr. Bright said that he did not ask his hearers to plunge into a violent agitation for the overthrow of the Established Church of England. It would be a great calamity if such a change should come through the turmoil of a great revolution. He only asked them to consider this question, which was the greatest of our time.

Mr. Dixon and Mr. Muntz subsequently spoke; and Mr. R. W. Dale moved a vote of regret at Mr. Gladstone's retirement, which was heartily and unanimously carried.

On the 28th of January, the Birmingham Liberal Association gave a conversazione in the Town Hall—in celebration of Mr. Bright's visit to the town—to the Committee of Four

Hundred, the Ward Committees, and their friends. Mr. J. S. Wright presided, and there were about one thousand persons present. Mr. Bright addressed the gathering, dwelling chiefly upon the causes which he believed had led to the Liberal reverses of 1874. He first explained the constitution of the Liberal Association of Birmingham known as the Four Hundred, which was perfect as a representation of the whole community of the town—that is, of the Liberal party. Everything that was of a public character was political in Birmingham. The municipality enclosed within itself the great spirit of the Liberal party in the town; and in the School Board elections they had had a signal and memorable triumph. Elsewhere, said Mr. Bright, things had been different; and people were demanding an explanation of the causes of the defeat. First, there was the question of legislation in regard to public-houses, which no doubt had a very serious influence. There had been a combination of the closest character for the purpose of sacrificing every public question, and every honourable consideration for the public good, to the low and sordid interest of the worst class of publicans in the country. A very considerable proportion of the majority obtained by the present Government was directly obtained from this combination. Another cause of defeat was this—the divisions which existed, and the absolutely childish policy that was pursued in many parts of the country, in many constituencies, by sections or fragments of the Liberal party. The temperance men, and a variety of other persons, had pursued their one idea or crotchet. Measures could never be carried by such tactics. At least a dozen boroughs had been lost at the last election by this mode of conduct; and assuming the publicans to be the cause of losing an equal number of votes, they would find whence came nearly the whole of the majority of the Government. Then there was another great cause of failure; the Liberals had made too sure, and had assumed that the power of the Tories was gone for ever, forgetting that the land and the Church were on their side. Then, too, there was timidity on the part of the wealthy, as well as the enormous lying indulged in against Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues during the whole time that they were in office. The American poet, Mr. Bryant, in his beautiful address to Liberty, said, 'Thou must never rest, for thine enemy never sleeps;' and this was advice which the Liberals of England must remember. Reformers could not yet afford to rest on their oars. Mr. Bright went on to remark that Birmingham was more intelligent, better informed, and more mentally alive on

political questions than any other great town in the kingdom; and if its superior organization were adopted elsewhere, it would take a very short time indeed to recover the losses sustained at the last election. With reference to the question of labour representatives in Parliament, Mr. Bright said that to have a Parliament composed of two classes would be one of the greatest calamities that could happen in our representative system. That was his view, though the principle might be honestly held by others. He instanced all the great reformers of various kinds in his own time—Lord John Russell, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Hume, Mr. Charles Villiers, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Ricardo, Mr. Milner Gibson—not one of whom was selected to represent particular classes. For himself, too, who had served alongside these men, he was by no means what would be called a working man. He called, in conclusion, for intelligent union amongst all classes of the Liberal party throughout the country, as well as earnest and combined work. To create a working-men's section in the House would destroy the unity of party, and subject themselves infallibly to the superior tactics of their opponents.

The three members for Birmingham again addressed their constituents on the 22nd of January, 1876, the Mayor (now Mr. Chamberlain, M.P.) presiding. The Town Hall was crowded, and the meeting was very enthusiastic. Upon a resolution of confidence being proposed, two amendments were moved—one having reference to the members' views upon labour representation, and the other relating to their action with regard to the Tichborne claimant. These amendments received but little support, and the vote of confidence was carried by an immense majority.

Mr. Bright spoke at some length, and was received with much enthusiasm, though his remarks were now and then interrupted by a section of trade unionists present, who were in favour of 'direct labour representation.' The right hon. gentleman spoke of the past session as 'a session of small measures,' and of the recess as a period of great discussion upon those measures. He asked to be excused from speaking of the loss of the *Vanguard*, the fugitive slave circular, and 'the great Stock Exchange transaction in which the Government has been concerned.' Upon the second of these, however, he said, 'That question is not so entirely easy as many of our friends have supposed; but the question which has always presented itself to me when I have heard anything about it, or thought anything about it, is this, Why could not the Government let it

alone? Mr. Bright devoted a large portion of his speech to criticizing Lord Derby's address to the Conservative working men of Edinburgh, remarking in passing that these 'Conservative working men' were never at home at election time. Lord Derby had spoken of the prosperity of the working classes at the present time, and what he had said was true; but the working classes owed no thanks to Lord Derby's party, who had resisted all the measures which had brought their prosperity about. Then as to his assertion that they were now, by means of the electoral franchise, masters of the political situation, Mr. Bright asked his hearers to recollect that in the counties the franchise was still no lower than £12 rating, which meant £16 rental. He disputed altogether Lord Derby's statements on the land question, into which he went at considerable length, and urged that the law of primogeniture ought to be abolished. What would you think, he asked, if any rich landowner, having, say, six children, were to doom five of them to ignorance, to shut them out from the training belonging to their position in life, and to give training and education to only one child? It would be no more monstrous than that he should shut them out from the whole of his property, and hand that property entirely to one child. Yet such is our law, and such is the custom of the country to an enormous extent. This has, I may say, been the most immoral principle which the law has sanctioned. Now what we ask is this,—and when men ask you what you mean by an alteration of the land laws, this is the kind of answer you may give: We ask for freedom of bequest, not for a forced forfeiture of the land. We ask that land should be the absolute property of each succeeding generation of men.'

Mr. Bright declined to say anything about the policy of the Liberal party, for he thought the Liberal party had too much policy. He went on nevertheless to express his opinion that the towns, having got municipal self-government, should seek to extend that system to the villages. All the good things in the way of legislation had been monopolized by the towns. Even the Education Act, which despite the criticisms passed upon it was 'doing some good,' was confined to the towns. He admitted that the enfranchisement of the rural householders would mean a redistribution of seats, but must come whether or no, though the progress 'might be somewhat steady and slow.' It would be more sure if the franchise was extended to the counties. No doubt (to use the Latin word for the use of which he had been criticized), there would be a 'residuum' among

the agricultural voters, but was there not a residuum among the landlords? Was there not a residuum in the Church? Appealing, in conclusion, to the electors before him, he said: 'I tell you that your own powers are warped and crippled by the paralysis which extends over the county representation, and if you could only examine the question fairly you would find that what I am asking you to undertake is to strengthen and confirm your own powers, whilst you are extending your franchises and rights to your fellow-countrymen in the counties. Give to the people who are now excluded that freedom which the constitution has given to you; give them the freedom of the soil upon which they live, and you will invite them—and with a cordial hand you will receive them—you will invite them to partake of that sublime justice which injures no one, but is rich in blessings and in benefits to all who are permitted to share it.'

In the course of the subsequent proceedings, and when answering questions put to him, Mr. Bright referred to the representation of labour. After paying a high tribute to Mr. Burt, whom he greatly esteemed, but not as a member for a class, he remarked: 'The only people who are returned to Parliament as the representatives of a particular trade are the brewers. I have some kind friends amongst the brewers, but they would be the very last persons to expect me to give them my vote because they are brewers; but really this question is not whether a man works at a bench or at a lathe, whether he is a doctor, or a lawyer, or a tradesman, or a brewer, or the son of a nobleman. Let us get rid of these notions. The intelligent constituencies, incorrupt like this of Birmingham, anxious to do their duty to themselves and their country, surely they can find men as men—not as a particular kind of men, but as men who will be honourable representatives, and who will do credit to us and good service in Parliament. I hope that those who brought forward this amendment will not think that I feel sore at the course they have thought fit to pursue. I only think that it was injudicious, because I feel that the Liberal party is always under a great disadvantage compared with the Tories, for the reason that it embraces a greater variety of sentiments and aims. You see how they work together in every constituency; they do not seek to know much about a candidate. If he is of the right colour, he is taken, and no questions are asked. So it is with them in the House of Commons, in their treatment of the leader of their party and of the Government. So no man should ever introduce questions which tend needlessly to split up the Liberal party; he ought only to do so

under the greatest pressure of circumstances from which he cannot escape.

On the 2nd of January, 1877, Mr. Bright attended the annual *soirée* of the Rochdale Working Men's club, and delivered an address. The club is entirely self-supporting, and independent of the patronage of the wealthy. Referring to the Gothenburg system of public-house management,—which Mr. Chamberlain, one of the members for Birmingham, had just explained to the public,—Mr. Bright said that the club whose anniversary they were celebrating had one advantage which the Gothenburg system had not, inasmuch as it did not urge its members to drink, but was glad when they abstained. Public opinion had put down duelling, and it might perhaps put down intemperance. He was not in the habit of using intoxicating liquors himself, but he was not in favour of a law which should say that no man should use such articles. There were many other things which the Legislature might do; as, for instance, keeping better order in public-houses, and lessening the temptations which were now offered to all men to take more drink than they ought. But even when all that legislation could do had been done, he would rely upon reason and experience for carrying the reform still further.

The right hon. gentleman then went on to review at some length the change for the better which had taken place in the condition of the working classes during the past forty years, and attributed it to the abolition of protective laws which formerly crippled the industry of the country, and to other political and social reforms which had been accomplished without violence or insurrection, and by which the tenure of property and the stability of the monarchy had been rendered more secure. 'There has never been,' said Mr. Bright, 'during the last hundred years, a period when the farmers of this country have made less complaint to the public or to Parliament than they have during the last thirty years, since the law for their protection was abolished. And what happened to the labourer? The wages of farm labourers have risen on the whole much more, I believe, than fifty per cent. throughout the whole country; and in some counties and districts, I believe, the farm labourer at this moment is receiving double the wages he was when the Corn Law was in existence. We ought to learn from this what a grand thing it is to establish our laws upon a basis of freedom and justice. It blesses him who gives and him who takes. It has blessed all our manufacturing districts with a steadiness of employment and an abundance they never

knew before; and it has blessed not less the very class who in their dark error and blindness thought that they could profit by that which was so unjust, so cruel to the bulk of their countrymen.' If asked why he had gone over again the old story of the Corn Law and the sugar monopoly, he replied, because it told working men and their children of freedom—how freedom was won and what freedom had done for them, while it pointed the way to other paths of freedom which yet lay open before them.

In a passing reference to the Eastern Question, Mr. Bright said he was glad to hear and believe that the policy of the Government was more in accordance with the policy indicated by public opinion than it was some weeks before. He did not blame the Government for their original policy, for it was supposed at the time to be the policy of the nation. They began with the policy of 1854 and of the Crimean war, and they adhered to its propositions some time after they ought to have abandoned it; but they had now adopted a course more in accordance with the opinions, and, as he believed, the true interests of the people. Mr. Bright concluded by urging upon working men the importance of securing a good education for their children. 'You know, I dare say,' he observed, 'a passage which is one of the many striking passages that you may find in the writings of Shakspeare, where he says, speaking of children that are rebellious and troublesome—

> "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child."

I ask working men, and I might ask it of every class to a certain extent, how much of the unhappiness of families, how much of the grief and gloom which often overshadow the later years of parents, come from what I may call the rebellion of children against their parents' authority, and against the moral law. If you will send your children to school, encourage them in their learning, make them feel that this is a great thing for them to possess, the generation to come will be much superior to the generations that have passed, and those who come after us will see that prospering of which we can only look forward to see the beginnings in the efforts which are now being made. And more than this, besides making your families happier, besides doing so much for the success of your children in life, you will also produce this great result, that you will do much to build up the fabric of the greatness and the glory of your country upon the sure foundation of an intelligent and a Christian people.'

At the invitation of Mr. Chamberlain and the Liberals of the borough, Mr. Gladstone visited Birmingham on the 31st of May, 1877, and delivered a series of addresses on public topics. The first of these was delivered on the evening of the 31st at Bingley Hall, when it was computed that there were some 30,000 persons present. The speech was chiefly devoted to the Eastern question. On the following day, after going over the Small Arms Factory at Small Heath, the right hon. gentleman went to the Bristol Street Board School, where he was presented with an address from the Committee of the Liberal Association, known as the 'Birmingham Six Hundred.' In the evening, he was entertained by the Mayor at a banquet in the Queen's Hotel, at which about two hundred gentlemen were present, including prominent members of the 'Six Hundred,' and members of the Corporation. Among the guests was Mr. Bright, who arrived from London, and was conducted by Mr. Chamberlain and others to the Queen's Hotel amidst the cheers of a large crowd. Several other members of Parliament were also present. In acknowledging the toast of his health, Mr. Gladstone touched upon his magnificent reception, and went on to say that he hoped Birmingham would continue to set an example of municipal spirit to all the municipalities of the country. Referring to the way in which Mr. Bright had been ready to sacrifice his popularity during the Crimean war, Mr. Gladstone said such conduct ennobled a man and the country which produced him.

When Mr. Bright rose to respond to the toast of the borough members, he was loudly cheered, the whole company standing. He said that the people of Birmingham had had a stirring week. They had had amongst them the most eminent man among the statesmen of this country and of this century; they had had the greatest political meeting within our own time held under one roof; and they had had what all the world would say was a great speech upon a great and solemn question. The object of their proceeding was twofold. The first had reference to the present policy of the country upon a question of extraordinary and unsurpassed importance, and the second was to do something to promote in future a more complete organization of the Liberal party throughout the country. As to the Eastern question, Mr. Bright said it would become him best to say almost nothing. Mr. Gladstone had referred in very kind, complimentary, and touching terms to the part he took in past times with regard to it, when he was in opposition to an overwhelming tide of public opinion. Now he could afford

to be silent, and he ought to be tranquil, and in some degree a spectator, because he saw the policy he had preached successful and triumphant. On the proposal for improving the organization of the Liberal party, Mr. Bright spoke at some length, observing that while it was not practicable for every borough to do what was done in Birmingham (where there was such a predominance of Liberal opinion), yet in all boroughs some organization of the kind might be most beneficial, and to a large extent most effectual. He next enumerated some of the causes which he considered operated to reduce the Liberal majority after the passing of the Household Suffrage Bill. The Liberals did not take means to support the power of the party in the different constituencies of the country, and they had also against them the influence of the landowners, the Church, the naval and military services, and the great majority of the professions. He believed that a good result would follow the increase of thought and activity which the proposed federation of Liberal associations would occasion. He was glad that no political programme was to be laid down, for he disliked programmes of any kind—they were as bad as the Thirty-Nine Articles. What should be done should be to stimulate an honest and wise interest in the politics of the country. In conclusion, Mr. Bright paid the following tribute to the town of Birmingham:—

'This week Birmingham is maintaining its ancient character. There is no town in England at this moment that occupies so great, and so proud, and at the same time so responsible a position as your town. You are foremost in good works, and have been for many years past. Your Town Hall is consecrated to freedom, but your Town Hall is now not one-quarter large enough for all those who would come to listen to a great speech on behalf of freedom. You now call upon your sister cities and towns throughout the kingdom to come forward and to join in a great association, in order that the opinion in England which is in favour of freedom may act with full force by its full development; and I say, then, that we have a right to hope that from this centre and heart of the country, as you are geographically and as you are politically—I say from this centre and heart of the country there should go forth light and warmth and heat, which should be seen and felt in every borough in the kingdom. And if it be so, and if you get the answer which I anticipate from those sister cities and towns, there is no measure that is good and noble, nothing that is a measure of freedom and justice, that you may not carry; and you from this centre may influence, as you have heretofore influenced, the administration and legislation that touches every portion of the great empire of which we form a part.'

In the session of 1877 Mr. Trevelyan brought forward his motion for the extension of household suffrage to the counties, and the redistribution of seats. The motion was defeated by a majority of 56, the numbers being 220 and 276 respectively; but the debate was of great significance, as from this time for-

ward the measure was formally adopted by the Liberals as an article of their future Ministerial creed.

A great meeting of agricultural labourers' delegates was held in Exeter Hall, to support Mr. Trevelyan's motion, and to listen to a speech from Mr. Bright. The meeting was a very representative one of all divisions of the country, and resolutions were passed in favour of household suffrage in the counties, and of a redistribution of seats, so as to obtain a better representation of the electoral body. Mr. Bright delivered a very effective and vigorous speech. He attributed the great advance of this country in the past forty-five years mainly to the Reform Bill, which enfranchised the citizens of the boroughs, and he believed that nearly equal results would follow the enfranchisement of the people in the counties. He looked to them in particular for a total change in the land laws. He repudiated the argument that the labourers were unfit for the franchise, holding that we must trust them as we had trusted the artisans in the boroughs. In an ironical vein, Mr. Bright observed that we might trust them the more easily because agricultural labourers had all 'the advantages' their superiors so appreciated for them. For them were the fresh air and the sunshine, for them especially the influence of the squire. They ought to be better than artisans by the landlords' own showing. He strongly eulogized the labourers' associations for sending up so numerous a body of delegates—twelve hundred picked men; and assured them, if they would only unite, of an easy victory. In order to secure this, however, they must associate themselves with their brethren of the towns.

When Mr. Bright unveiled the Cobden statue at Bradford, on the 25th of July, 1877—an event referred to elsewhere—after the ceremony was over he was entertained at luncheon with other guests at the Victoria Hotel, Bradford, by Mr. Jacob Behrens, President of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce. In replying to the toast of his health, Mr. Bright spoke on the question of Free Trade. He dwelt on the effect which extended commercial intercourse between countries had in rendering war between them almost impossible—as in the case of England and France since the adoption of the Commercial Treaty; and he suggested the formation of an international committee, which should endeavour to bring about the reduction of tariffs all over Europe, until the various countries should be so bound together by their commercial interests that the maintenance of large armaments 'would be an act of absolute and obvious lunacy.' He maintained that for England to return

to Protection under any form, to Reciprocity, which meant a war of tariffs, would be to bar the progress of the world, and to destroy our hopes of future peace. In the United States the system of Protection had been shaken, and was tottering to its fall. 'The fact is,' said the right hon. gentleman, discussing the future of commerce, 'the world, as we are in it but for a very short time, does not seem to go on very fast, and we must be satisfied if we can only move it a little; but the interests of all mankind are so bound up in this question that it only wants that you should dispel the sort of fog which intercepts their vision, when they would come at once to see a promised land which was within their reach, and a fruit such as they have never tasted that was within their grasp; and if this view could once be opened up to the intelligent people in these countries of a constantly growing intelligence, I have a confident belief that the time will come, that it must come, that it is in the decrees of the Supreme that it shall come, when these vast evils shall be suppressed, and men shall not learn war any more, and God's earth shall not be made, as it is, a charnel-house by the constant murder of hundreds of thousands of His creatures.'

The new Town Hall at Manchester—built from the designs of Mr. Waterhouse—was formally opened on the 13th of September, 1877, by the Mayor, Mr. Abel Heywood. In the evening there was a banquet, presided over by the Mayor, and among the guests were the Lord Chief Justice, the Bishop of Manchester, Mr. John Bright, Lord Winmarleigh, and several members of Parliament representing Lancashire towns.

In responding to the toast of the House of Commons, Mr. Bright remarked that for some time the health of that body had been indifferent, and he suggested as a remedy that it should be sent to the country. Referring to the state of the cotton trade, he warned the people of Manchester of circumstances affecting trade, and perhaps pointing to certain dangers, which it would not be wise entirely to overlook:—

'Thus we often find, with all our philanthropy in wishing the people to have more recreation, and with the hope that many feel that the workman should better his condition through his combinations, that we are ourselves aiding—it may be inevitably and necessarily—but it is a fact that we are aiding to increase the difficulties under which we labour in sending foreign countries the products of the industry of these districts; and we must not forget that great cities have fallen before Manchester and Liverpool were known—great mercantile cities on the shores of the Mediterranean, the cities of Phœnicia, the cities of Carthage, Genoa, and Venice. The poet says of Venice—

"Her daughters had their dowers
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers."

But what are the lines with which he concludes?—

> "Venice lost and won,
> Her thirteen hundred years of freedom done,
> Sinks like a seaweed into whence she rose."

Therefore, when we are met in this magnificent Hall to enjoy the generous hospitality of the Mayor and his friends, and surrounded by the vast industries of this powerful district, let us not for a moment imagine that we stand on a foundation absolutely sure and immovable, or that we are not liable to the dangers which have overthrown and overwhelmed the great municipalities and cities and the prosperous industries of other countries and other times.'

Mr. Bright then went on to deal with the question of Indian administration. He said that we hardly did anything except under the pressure of some great emergency and calamity. The calamity of the Mutiny overthrew the East India Company; and he hoped from his heart that the calamity which had overtaken a part of India, and which stirred the hearts of all the people of England, would have the effect of opening up a new and a better policy. We had spent more than £100,000,000 in making railways in India, and many of them were profitable; but when the Government undertook to provide railways they did it largely from the idea that they would be of great service in a military point of view. He believed, however, that if we had spent one-third of the amount we had spent on railways in canals for navigation and irrigation, none of those famines which during the last few years had swept away, or were sweeping away, two or three millions of the population would have occurred; the condition of the people would have been better, the production of the soil enormously increased, the traffic between England and India in its supply of articles we want would have been greatly extended, and its power from its greater wealth of consuming the productions of our industry would also have been far beyond anything we had hitherto seen. Mr. Bright, referring to the plans of Sir Arthur Cotton, said he believed it was calculated that the whole of the canals Sir Arthur proposed might have been made for the sum of probably twenty-five millions, certainly not more than thirty millions sterling, which, after all, was a mere bagatelle, because it was only a million a year in interest, and only about three times as much as was spent in the miserable Abyssinian war. 'If there is some question of that kind,' said Mr. Bright, 'Parliament grants £10,000,000 or £20,000,000, and the thing is done; they say the honour of the country is concerned. Can there be anything in which the honour of the country is more concerned than this, that we, whose fathers conquered India,

with its two hundred millions of people – can there be anything in which our interests are more concerned than that we, their children, should if possible turn that bequest to the greatest account, and having received, we know not how or why, that great responsibility, we should endeavour, if possible, adequately to fulfil it? Alms-giving is often very good, but not always. Alms-giving now is general throughout the country, on behalf of the Indian sufferers; let every man's purse be open as his heart is open, and let him give; but I tell him, without the slightest hesitation, that though what he gives will carry its blessing with it now to some poor wretch in that distant country, still it will do little for the future. What you want is a new and a wiser and a broader policy; and that policy, I much fear, you will never have from the Government of Calcutta until the people of England say that it is their policy, and must be adopted.'

On the 25th of September, 1877, Mr. Bright attended a meeting at Rochdale, and distributed the Queen's prizes and the certificates of merit to the successful students of the science and art classes of the Rochdale Co-operative Equitable Pioneers' Society. Addressing the meeting, he spoke of the progress of science and art during the past century, and of the mode in which modern scientific discoveries had been devoted to the improvement of the condition of the people. He referred especially to the manufacture of gas, the application of steam-power to the purposes of production, and to the wonderful strides which of late years had been made by the cheap press. Mr. Bright pointed out that all inventions of modern science—the telegraph, the steamboat, the locomotive, photography, etc., although they had given additional power to wealth, had done far more for the working classes. Science, he remarked, was the most just and beneficent of all the dispensers of good. It spread its blessings over all the people. 'Does not the gas shine with the same brilliancy in one of your cottages as it does here? Does not the steamboat take one of you, although you may be living upon your six days' wages for your six days' work, and you have not much to spare—does not the same boat take you as rapidly and as safely across the ocean as it takes some man deputed by the Government of his country to some great negotiation in foreign lands? Does not the railway, on most of the lines at least, take the third-class passengers at the same speed at which even Royalty itself travels?' The speaker concluded by urging his hearers to bring the same energy and hard-headedness which distin-

guished them when in pursuit of their trades to the pursuit of knowledge in their leisure hours, and they would speedily find that they had trevelled a long distance. From Rochdale they might not have many great inventors, but still great things would be done.

A meeting was held at Rochdale, on the 7th of November, 1877, for the purpose of hearing an address from Mr. Chamberlain, M.P., on political organization, and particularly upon the machinery by which the town of Birmingham had been able to defeat the minority clause in the Reform Act of 1877.

Mr. Bright delivered a brief introductory speech, and began by contrasting the motives which had guided the two great political parties in their legislative efforts, observing that to the Conservatives belonged shame and humiliation, and to the Liberals a very high degree of satisfaction and just pride, when they contemplated the results of the last half-century of legislation and government in this country. He gave the Conservatives credit for the possession of a solid and permanent organization, the strength of which was to be found in the landed interest, the Church, the military and legal professions, and in the publicans; and said that unless the Liberal party organized themselves to advance their own cause and principles, the country would go back, and we might even lose some of the liberties we had gained. Touching upon the landed interest, Mr. Bright said that he did not advocate any system of legislation which would deprive anybody of a single acre of land, but the land should be divided a little more equally among the great body of the people; and he objected to laws which created and maintained a monopoly in this matter. In speaking of the Church, Mr. Bright referred to the recent Charge of the Bishop of Truro, in which he strongly advised the clergy upon the necessity for them to complete their organization, so as to be the better able to contend with, and, if possible, to overcome Dissent in Cornwall, which was the most religious county in England. Mr. Bright said he thought that was very strange, and proved beyond all question what a tendency there was in an Established Church to fight for the Church rather than for Christianity. In speaking of the Conservative party as being especially opposed to a reform of the law, he said: 'The laws of this country, in their complexity, in their entanglement, in their costliness, are a disgrace to a civilized people. Two hundred years ago Cromwell, who was no bad judge of these things, said, "The law of England is a tortuous and ungodly jumble." But you might almost as

well ask a spider to give up weaving his web, or to destroy the web he has woven, as ask the great body of lawyers to consent to the simplification and purification of the law.' Observing that Rochdale had done its duty well since the year 1832, Mr. Bright added: 'I recall to myself the names of the men who have had to speak in your voice in the House of Commons, and on every fitting occasion to promote the principles you hold dear—Fenton, Sharman Crawford, Miall, Cobden, and your present member, Mr. Potter. Let us then keep the flame alive. Let us, if we can, be as we have been in the past, an example to many other constituencies.'

The right hon. gentleman then introduced Mr. Chamberlain, in very complimentary language, to the audience. After the lecture, votes of thanks were passed to the Chairman and his colleague. Mr. Bright, in responding, alluding to observations which had been made as to the possibility of our being involved in war, said that the members of a Government which would go to war for such visionary objects as to prevent the passage of Russian fleets through the Dardanelles were only fit to become inmates of one of those public buildings in which are placed, for their own preservation, such of our unhappy fellow-creatures as had become bereaved of their reason.' He further said that he agreed with Mr. Chamberlain that, save and except the question which was near at hand, the county franchise, there was no question which was so near to our prosperity, and our deliverance from many of the great depressions of trade, as the question of land reform.

On the 19th of April, 1878, Mr. Bright attended the annual Good Friday Conference of the Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire Sunday School Association at Rochdale. The assembly represented the teachers of nearly 500,000 children in the various Sunday-schools of the district. The right hon. gentleman delivered an address, tracing the influence of the Sunday-school upon the morals, manners, and education of the young. Having pointed out the effect which the establishment of Board schools was having upon religious teaching, he proceeded to argue that one of the special duties of a Sunday-school teacher was to instil principles antagonistic to war of any kind, or on any pretext. He said the unanimous opinion of the Nonconformist element in the country was against war; and he reiterated his opinion that every object for which war was sometimes considered necessary could be obtained by peaceful negotiation. Mr. Bright thus forcibly concluded his address:—

'If on Sunday last it had been put, or if on Sunday next it could be put, to all the Nonconformist Free Church congregations throughout Great Britain, whether it were the duty or the interest of this country to be involved in war or not, I have no doubt whatsoever that throughout all those congregations, from Caithness to Cornwall, there would have been a universal and unanimous voice in favour of the preservation of peace. Lord Derby said not long ago that the greatest of British interests was peace. Can it be possible that the Christian men and women who are engaged in your holy work should not coincide with him in that view? You are yourselves the ministers, humble but earnest, of the Prince of Peace. It is, therefore, within your calling, within your solemn duty—even it may be your special duty on an occasion like this,—that you should express some feeling on this question; and if there ascends from your heart a prayer to the throne of the Most High on behalf of your children and on behalf of your nation, let it be a prayer that He may turn the hearts of your rulers from thoughts of war, and bring them to sentiments of mercy and of peace. When I think of the illustrious lady who sits upon the throne of these realms, when I think how bright in the main are the annals of her reign—the one greatest blot upon them in our time, and until now, is the war of twenty-four years ago,—let us hope that our hearts may be spared the sorrow that must afflict us, and the record of her reign be spared the additional blot which would be cast upon it if again the blood of our countrymen should be shed in favour of a cause which no man can distinctly define or describe, and in pursuit of objects which no rational man in the world believes it is possible for arms to obtain.'

With regard to the question of Free Trade and Protection, Mr. Bright has frequently expressed his surprise at the slow progress made in the United States in this matter. One of his most important letters on the subject was addressed to Mr. Cyrus W. Field, of New York, on the 21st of January, 1879. 'I do not think,' he wrote, 'that anything an Englishman could say would have any effect upon an American protectionist. The man who possesses a monopoly by which he thinks he gains is not open to argument. It was so in this country forty years ago, and it is so with you now. It is strange that a people who put down slavery at an immense sacrifice are not able to suppress monopoly, which is but a milder form of the same evil. Under slavery, the man was seized and his labour was stolen from him, and the profit of it enjoyed by his master and owner. Under protection, the man is apparently free, but he is denied the right to exchange the produce of his labour except with his countrymen, who offer him much less for it than a foreigner would give. Some portion of his labour is thus confiscated. In our protection days our weavers and artisans could not exchange with American flour. They exchanged with an English farmer, who gave them sometimes only half the quantity the American would have given them. Now your farmer is forbidden to trade with the Englishman, and must give to an American double the quantity of grain and flour for many articles he is constantly requiring that he would give if your laws

did not forbid his trade with England. A country may have democratic institutions, its government may be Republican, and based on a wide suffrage, and yet there may be no freedom to men for that which is the source of life and comfort. If a man's labour is not free, if its exchange is not free, the man is not free; and whether the law which enacts this restriction be the offspring of Republican or autocratic government and power, it is equally evil, and to be condemned and withstood by all who love freedom and understand what it is. Nations learn slowly—but they do learn; and therefore I do not doubt that the time will come when trade will be as free as the winds, and when freedom of industry will do much to put down great armies and the peril and suffering of war.'

At the time of the Zulu war, and when affairs in the East also absorbed much attention, a letter was addressed to Mr. Bright on behalf of a Birmingham branch of a Workmen's Peace Society, inquiring whether he would support a bill compelling the Crown and Government to consult Parliament before going to war; whether he would support the Beaconsfield Goverment in proposing the reduction of standing armies; and whether he would support an inquiry into the existing system of pensions, with a view to the abolition of such as those of the Duke of Marlborough and the Duke of Schomberg; and also whether he was in favour of Mr. Macdonald s Liability of Employers Bill, and a bill to shorten Parliaments. Mr. Bright replied as follows, in a letter dated March 11th, 1879: 'I cannot say "Yes" or "No" to the questions you put to me. Any answer I could give to them would require explanation and more length of writing than I can put into an ordinary letter. I may say, however, that generally, I doubt not, my views are in harmony with yours on the points you have named. With regard to the liabilities of employers, if I remember them correctly, I was willing to support the conclusions of the Committee appointed to consider the whole question. .The bill then before the House seemed to me to require amendment. The pensions to which you refer should have been terminated by purchase long ago. Those perpetual pensions should never be granted. I think no Parliament should sit for more than five years; probably three or four years would be a better term. With regard to the reduction of armies, it is ludicrous to think of supporting this Government in any attempt of the kind. The policy of this Government for three years past has made the reduction of armies less possible than it was before, and has been the cause of all the wars which have afflicted the world. Du-

ring that period they have made needless war in Asia and Africa, and were a main cause of the great war in the east of Europe. I hope they have convinced the nation that Parliament does not exert a sufficient control over the disposition to go to war shown by the Ministers of the Crown. But it must be remembered that the Parliament has partaken largely of the guilt of the Administration. A better House of Commons must precede any of the good things which you are hoping for.'

Foreign affairs and our recent wars formed the burden of a great speech which Mr. Bright delivered in Birmingham on the 10th of April, 1879, when the borough members addressed their constituents in the Town Hall. The right hon. gentleman began his speech by a regretful contrast between that and former meetings of the kind. At most of the previous meetings they could rejoice at the advancing progress of some great principle, or that some great principle had been established in some great act of beneficent legislation. But the most sanguine could not now find any cause for rejoicing or exultation. They had, in point of fact, not one single measure to point to which had been the result of the deliberations of the existing Administration. 'What the Ministers are doing is just this—nothing whatsoever that is useful at home, and everything that you can imagine that is mischievous abroad.' Mr. Bright regretted that it had been the habit of English Governments in former years, as now, to neglect home affairs for foreign; and he insisted that our policy abroad had always proved disastrous, and had been condemned by succeeding generations. The American war was a failure; so was the war to prevent the establishment of a Republic in France; so was the Crimean war. There was not a single thing that was obtained by the Treaty of Paris after the Crimean war that had not been surrendered and entirely given up. After bringing his retrospect down to the beginning of the late war between Russia and Turkey, 'I believe,' he said, 'that war was only avoided last year by two causes—one was the moderation of Russia immediately after her triumph over Turkey; the other was the course taken by the great Liberal party, by the Nonconformists specially as a great portion of that party, and by the foremost man among the statesmen of this country.'

When the cheering which followed this reference to Mr. Gladstone had subsided, Mr. Bright continued: 'There are men who even now, as they have done, I suppose, for years past, cavil at the position which Mr. Gladstone occupies. I shall say nothing in his defence, but the posterity of those who now slander him

will be ashamed of the opinions and of the conduct of their forefathers. But though we have escaped war, we have had, as you know, fleets moving from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, moving and menacing in many seas; and we have had reserves called out, as if something dreadful was about to happen; and we have had the Indian troops—a thing almost unknown in our history—brought into the Mediterranean with a view of carrying on war against Russia; and we have had votes of money which it was said would probably not be spent, but which was for the most part very suddenly and speedily spent; and what has been the actual result? Why, the result of the Crimean war, of the American and of the French war, was not more absurd and more discreditable. We have agreed to everything that Russia proposed, except that we have handed over Roumelia, which has been freed by Russia, to the odious Government of the Turks.'

On the subject of Egypt Mr. Bright said: 'The bondholders in connection with the Khedive of Egypt may be put into two classes—the fools who lent the money, and the gamblers who have been speculating in it since. It is said that France has more fools and gamblers than we have in this matter, and that their Government is very anxious to force the Khedive to pay up to the French bondholders. We, not liking that France should have a special interest there, go in also, although our Government does not care much about the English bondholder; but you observe our Government allows one of its own officers to go there, and France sends an officer there; and these two gentlemen offer to the Khedive to manage all his money affairs; and the Khedive, like a great many people, does not like this kind of transaction, and having read, as I dare say he did read, what Sir Stafford Northcote, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I think within the last month, said—that the Khedive had a right—that it was within his legal right—to get rid of those gentlemen—he has considered whether that was not a wise thing to do, and has dismissed them both very suddenly. Now I take the liberty of expressing the opinion upon this matter, that the whole thing from beginning to end has been a grievous and very stupid mistake, and that the going into partnership with France, or with any other country, in the management of affairs, whatever the country is, is almost sure to lead to great trouble, to irritation, and it may be to entire separation of feeling between two Governments and two countries.' The proper thing for our Government to do would be to withdraw, and to

allow the Khedive and his creditors to manage affairs as well as they could.

Dealing next with the war in Afghanistan, Mr. Bright said he doubted whether there had ever been a war more deformed by falseness and by dishonour. It was a war notoriously conducted for annexation—whether annexation of a portion or the whole of the country, none of us knew. As the result of the assumed defence of our Indian possessions, there was thrown upon the thirty-four millions of people in the United Kingdom the cost of the enormous burden we had undertaken in our scheme of controlling, reforming, defending, annexing, or advising for the whole ground from the Gulf of Venice and the Adriatic Sea, all round the Mediterranean to Egypt, to the Persian Gulf, through Persia to Afghanistan and the Himalayan Mountains. Mr. Bright next spoke upon our responsibilities in connection with India, but this portion of his speech we have dealt with elsewhere. As to the theory that a neutral zone was desirable between England and Russia in Asia, he said that he had told either Lord Clarendon or Lord Granville and the Duke of Argyll, when his opinion was asked on the subject some years ago, that he thought it would be better if the frontiers of the two empires were conterminous. Observing that he had not assailed the Government, he said in conclusion—

'I leave them to the retribution which awaits them. They have played, in my view, falsely both with Parliament and with the country. They have wasted, and are now wasting, the blood and the treasure of our people. They have tarnished the mild reign of the Queen by needless war and slaughter on two continents, and by the menace of needless war in Europe; they have soiled the fair name of England by subjecting and handing over the population of a province which had been freed by Russia, through war and treaty, to the cruel and the odious government of the Turk. And beyond this, they have shown, in my view, during an interval of five years through which they have been in possession of office and of power, that they are imbecile at home and turbulent and wicked abroad. I leave them to the judgment of the constituencies of the United Kingdom, to which they must speedily appeal, and to the heavy condemnation which impartial history will pronounce upon them.'

This speech, with the later speeches of Mr. Gladstone, had much to do with rousing the feeling of the country against the 'spirited' foreign policy of Lord Beaconsfield's Administration.

Mr. Rice, editor of the *North American Review*, having written to Mr. Bright for his opinion as to the nature and extent of the alleged movement in favour of Protection in England, the right hon. gentleman replied as follows early in June, 1879:—

'I do not think there is any chance in this country of a return to the doctrine of Protection. We export everything but agricultural produce. To pro-

tect our manufactures is manifestly impossible. From another cause the protection of our land produce is not more possible. Half our population exists on imported food. To limit this import by Customs duties, in order to raise the price of home grown food, is a proposition that cannot be entertained for one moment. Such a scheme offered to Parliament and the country would destroy any Government and any party. We are passing through a time of commercial depression. Its causes are apparent to those who examine and consider the facts of recent past years. But in times of trouble ignorant men seize upon unlikely and impossible propositions and schemes for relief. There is no special remedy for this malady. Time, patience, the working of natural laws, the avoidance and cessation of the excitement and half-madness of the past, and a general economy, will bring about a cure, not without some or much suffering, but without failure. We adopted Free Trade in the year 1846. But our landowners and farmers, and multitudes of our people, did not comprehend the principles we taught, and now a new generation is on the stage, ill-acquainted even with the facts of forty years ago. There has been no great distress since our Corn Law was abolished; and now, when trouble has come for a time, some of the sufferers, and some of the quack doctors who are always ready to prescribe for the public, cry out for Protection, as if we never tried it before, and as if it had been found a specific in other countries. There is no danger of our going back to Protection. The present trouble will pass away. It has been aggravated by the evil policy of our Government; and that also will pass away; and the simpletons who are looking for relief to an exploded doctrine and practice will relapse into that silence and obscurity which become them. It is a grief to me that your people do not yet see their way to a more moderate tariff. They are doing wonders unequalled in the world's history in paying off their national debt. A moderate tariff, I should think, would give you a better revenue, and by degrees you might approach a more civilized system. What can be more strange than for your great free country to build barriers against that commerce which is everywhere the handmaid of freedom and of civilization? I should despair of the prospects of mankind if I did not believe that before long the intelligence of your people would revolt against the barbarism of your tariff. The world looks to you for example in all forms of freedom. As to commerce, the great civilizer, shall it look in vain?'

Two or three months after penning this letter, Mr. Bright took another opportunity of demolishing various fallacies in connection with Protection, as well as certain erroneous notions respecting his own attitude and that of his fellow-agitators against the Corn Laws. Mr. William Russell, a working man in Glasgow, who described himself as having been an enthusiastic member of the Anti-Corn-Law League, having written to Mr. Bright asking his opinion as to the existing widespread depression in trade, the right hon. gentleman replied as follows:—

'You say that in our agitation, now nearly forty years ago, we urged that a necessary consequence of Corn Law repeal would be that "war would cease, and that there would be no more commercial and agricultural depression." We never said this. We said that Free Trade greatly tends to promote peace between nations, and that commercial depression caused by the Corn Laws on the occasion of every bad harvest would be prevented. Before 1846, and during the thirty years of Corn Law, there were five or six Parliamentary Committees on agricultural distress; during more than thirty years of free imports of corn, until this session, there has been no such Committee appointed or asked for; and now all sensible men know that the Commission to be

appointed is a mere delusion, held out to cajole the farmers. War has not ceased. We made the Russian war in 1854, and since then the armaments of Europe have much more than doubled. Free trade—imports of corn—cannot make Englishmen or Scotchmen sensible or moral. But with regard to France, every man must know that our relations with France have been much more friendly since Mr. Cobden's treaty came into force; and that now we are on most friendly terms with the nation with whom in past times we have most frequently contended on the battle-field. As to Germany and its tariff, its military expenditure demands more taxes, and by offering higher duties to her manufacturers higher taxes are made less unwelcome to many of her people. I am not aware of any movement towards Protection in Italy, or Belgium, or France. In France the cause of Free Trade is far more powerful now than at any former period. America has had her tremendous civil war; but for that and her enormous debt, Protection would have been dead and buried long ago; and nobody surely expected or said that the repeal of our Corn Laws could make or prevent a civil war on the great question of slavery in the United States! Why don't you and your friends ask why American commercial distress has been much deeper and more prolonged than our own? Yet America has all the good which Protection can give her. We are suffering from many bad harvests at home; from famines and poverty in India and China; from depression in North and South America; from like suffering in Germany; from war in the East of Europe; and from the extravagance and inflation of the years preceding the present bad times. And, after all, our people as a whole suffer infinitely less than in the three years from 1839 to 1842; and our farm labourers, who were to be specially ruined, are receiving nearly double the wages, and of that which wages can buy, than they received in the three years to which I have referred. If you use your faculties as well now as you did in the days of the Free Trade contest, you will not doubt the wisdom of our present policy.'

On the subject of Canadian policy, Mr. Bright wrote the following letter, dated Rochdale, August 16, 1879, to a gentleman in New York: 'The policy of the Canadian Government seems to me injurious to the inhabitants of the Dominion, and, if persisted in, will be fatal to its connection with the mother-country. To shut out the manufactures of England is bad enough, but at the same time to seek to borrow money from her on a guarantee for a loan is a scheme and a policy so impudent that it cannot succeed. The great railway project of Canada, can only add to the debt of Canada, and this can only cause heavier taxes, and will be made the excuse for still higher protective duties on imports; so that England's generous but foolish help to the colony, if further given, will tend directly to cripple the trade between them. I believe the present policy of the Canadian Government is inflicting a wound on the union between the colony and England from which, if it be not speedily reversed, great changes must come. I watch the progress of the Protection malady in the States and Canada with great interest. I cannot think it will continue very long.'

The restless and meddlesome policy of the Beaconsfield Government in Asia and the East of Europe, which for some

time had apparently received the approbation of the country, began to be appreciated at its real value by the autumn of 1879. There is not an Administration in the history of the country since the time of Walpole which so wantonly, and without reason, outraged the sentiments of the great mass of the people of England, as did Lord Beaconsfield's Government in the years extending from 1875 to the beginning of the year 1880. At last the people began to awake from their nightmare. They asked themselves whether it had been a worthy exchange—that of the dismissal of Mr. Gladstone, the greatest commercial and domestic Minister that England has ever seen, for Lord Beaconsfield, who had only a so-called enterprising foreign policy to fall back upon, that policy being framed according to circumstances and not to conviction,—framed in the most haphazard and fortuitous manner. The Government found at last that the sands were shifting under them, and that a great effort must be made to retain their waning popularity. After much cogitation, what did they do? They decided to beard the Opposition in one of their most powerful quarters.

The situation being regarded as critical, it was deemed advisable that Lord Salisbury should go down to Manchester, with the double object of showing that the Government was not afraid to appeal to the country in one of the greatest of Liberal strongholds, and also of expounding the chief doctrines of the Conservative creed. After much Tory skirmishing elsewhere, on the 17th and 18th of October, accordingly, Lord Salisbury appeared at the Pomona Gardens, Manchester. The demonstration was heralded for weeks beforehand, and the very fact that the Tories dared to invest one of the great Liberal strongholds, drew together many thousands of persons who were considered to sympathize with the Conservative demonstration, but who in reality were not the least in harmony with it. Lord Salisbury spoke at length upon his Circular concerning the San Stefano Treaty, and its purpose of resisting Russian encroachment. He said nothing, however, to indicate what course the Government meant to take in consequence of the new turn of affairs in Afghanistan. He described the new alliance between Austria and Germany as 'glad tidings of great joy.'

The vast assemblage in the Pomona Gardens was estimated by the managers of the meeting at from 150,000 to 200,000. It led to a great counterblast on the part of the Liberals. Although the Conservatives had been preparing for weeks, the Liberal gathering which took place only a week later—that is,

on the 25th—was said by journals not favourable to the Liberal cause to have appeared a larger one than that organized by the Tories. Mr. R. N. Philips, M.P., presided at the meeting held in the large hall, and a number of Liberal members were on the platform. A resolution condemning the Government for its neglect of necessary domestic legislation, and for the 'arrogant, pretentious duplicity and incompetence of its foreign policy,' was adopted. The Marquis of Hartington (who on the previous day had replied in detail to Lord Salisbury's defence of his Circular) now made a brief speech, in which he drew a contrast between the present and the late Administrations, and declared that when the time came the Liberals would not be afraid to appeal to the country upon the ground of any comparison that might be made.

But the chief duty of the day, as regards the condemnation of Tory policy and the defence of the Liberal programme, fell upon Mr. Bright. On rising to speak, he had a most enthusiastic reception. The audience rose, a band behind the platform struck up 'The Fine Old English Gentleman,' and several verses of the song were sung by the audience. Afterwards the cheering was again and again renewed. In the outset there was some little disturbance in the vast audience, arising from the fact that all present could not see the speaker. This feeling was expressed by one of the right hon. gentleman's admirers, who called out, 'They want to look at you, John!' This voice crying in the wilderness led to another general demonstration of applause, and when order had been something like restored the orator proceeded.

Mr. Bright replied at length to Lord Salisbury's attack on the Free Trade legislation of thirty years back, and gave an eloquent summary of the questions that would come before the country at the general election. 'When Sir Robert Peel came into office in the year 1841, and when he began in 1842 to amend the tariff, he found a list of duties I dare say longer than this paper, beginning with corn at the top, and going down to something which was called "divi-divi." (*Laughter.*) I recollect that when the word "divi-divi" was pronounced in the House of Commons, there was a universal looking at one another among the members. Nearly everybody laughed, and everybody admitted that he had never heard of it before. But our tariff was so minute, the net was so fine and the meshes were so small, that scarcely anything could pass it. Corn was kept out, the millions of quarters that we wanted, and "divi-divi" was subject to a considerable duty. (*Laughter.*) Accord-

ing to the doctrines of Lord Salisbury, what would he and his party have done at that time? They would have begun with "divi-divi"—(*laughter and cheers*); and if it had not been for the Anti-Corn-Law League and the occasional, the growing, and the inevitable famine, they would not have arrived at the article of corn even to this day.' (*Cheers.*)

The vastness of his audience seemed almost to overcome Mr. Bright at the commencement of his speech, but as he proceeded his voice regained all its old power, and penetrated to every corner of the great hall. Remarkably incisive were his attacks upon the Government and its leading members. Lord Beaconsfield he described as 'the man who, of all others, with the most bitter invective, with the most audacious insinuations, with the most violent slanders, did his very utmost to injure and to destroy the character of Sir Robert Peel.' Lord Salisbury he described as 'the man who has prostrated his intellect to the Premier in the hope of purchasing a succession that may never come.' Speaking of the attempt to force England into a war with Russia, Mr. Bright, in a comprehensive indictment, declared that 'there were criminals at head-quarters, fools and imbeciles among the people, and baseness enough amongst the proprietors and the writers of some newspapers, to give for a time a semblance of popularity to the madness and the guilt of such a war.'

On the question of Free Trade and Reciprocity, Mr. Bright observed, with regard to the opponents of Free Trade: 'They say that "Free Trade is not so good as we thought, and Protection is not so bad as we thought; and if the protectionists of foreign countries will not follow our course, we will go back from our course and adopt the course they have pursued." That is what Protectionists and Reciprocity-mongers say. (*Laughter and cheers.*) And there is another thing they say—that we promised that all other nations would immediately become Free-traders, which is not true—(*hear, hear*); and they argue falsely and foolishly that because other nations to a large extent still maintain the principles of Protection, therefore our course is to a large extent proved to have been wrong. May I just explain for one moment what is the difference? They say, "Foreign nations have taken up your penny postage; the great measure recommended by Sir Rowland Hill is one which Europe and all the civilized world have adopted." And they say, "All Europe and the civilized world have adopted your system of railways." What is the difference? Just this—that nobody had any interest in paying one shilling for a letter when he could have it carried for a penny. Nobody had any interest in going in

an old slow coach at a high price when he could go in the railway train five times as fast for one-fifth of the cost.'

The right hon. gentleman next contrasted the work achieved by Mr. Disraeli's Government and the great Administration of Mr. Gladstone, with its Irish reforms, its abolition of purchase, etc. He also asked—'If the Zulu war had been brought before the House of Commons; if the Afghan war, with its fraud and its slaughter, and its chaos over that region, had been brought before the House of Commons; if it had been submitted to the House of Commons that we should go to war with Russia upon this single question—for that was the whole question at last—whether Bulgaria should all be free, or whether a part of it should be free and a portion less free—does any man here, whatever he may think of the Tory party and the mechanical majority in the House—does any man here believe that the Tory party would have, by distinct vote in the House of Commons, plunged the country into any one of these wars?' (*'No,' and cheers.*)

In conclusion, Mr. Bright called for worthier men to be placed at the head of affairs; and this was his peroration:—

'We have heard lately a great deal of "Imperial policy" and of a "great empire." These are phrases which catch the ignorant and unwary. Since this Government came into office, your great empire—upon the map—has grown much greater. They have annexed the islands of Fiji—(*laughter*); they have annexed also the country of the Transvaal in South Africa, which is said to be as large as France. They have practically annexed the land of the Zulus, also in South Africa; and they have practically annexed—for it is now utterly disorganized, and they seem to be left alone to repair, if it is possible, the mischief they have made—they have practically annexed Afghanistan. They have added also to your dominions the island of Cyprus, in the Mediterranean—(*laughter*); and they have incurred enormous, incalculable responsibilities in Egypt and Asia Minor. All these add to the burdens, not of the empire—just listen to this—they add to the burdens, not of the empire in Canada or Australia—all these colonies have nothing to do as a rule with these things—they add to the burdens, not of the empire, but of the 34,000,000 people who inhabit Great Britain and Ireland. We take the burden and we pay the charge. This policy may lend a seeming glory to the Crown, and may give scope for patronage, and promotion, and pay, and pensions to a limited and favoured class; but to you, the people, it brings expenditure of blood and treasure, increased debt and taxes, and added risks of war in every quarter of the globe.

'Look on our position for one moment. You have to meet the competition of other countries; your own race on the American continent are your foremost rivals. Nobody denies that, I believe. They are fifty millions now, and happily for them they have not yet bred a Beaconsfield or a Salisbury—(*laughter and cheers*)—to misdirect their policy and to waste their resources. (*Loud cheers.*) If at some distant period, it may be centuries remote, an Englishman—one of that great English nation which is now so rapidly peopling the American continent—if such an Englishman should visit and explore the sources of his race, and the decayed and ruined home of his fathers, he

may exclaim, "How are the mighty fallen! whence comes this great ruin?" And the answer will be that in the councils of the England of the past—I pray that it may not be said in the days of a virtuous Queen—wisdom and justice were scorned, and ignorance, and passion, and vain-glory directed her policy and wielded her power.' (*Loud and prolonged cheers.*)

We turn from this speech, which had a great effect upon the public mind at that time, to one of a totally different character.

About a week later—that is, on the 31st of October, Mr. Bright spoke at a conversazione given by the Mayor of Birmingham to the school teachers of that town. He referred to the work of the religious and secular teacher, and contended that the influence of the latter was infinitely greater than that of the former. It was not, however, mere book-learning that made a man a wise citizen, and he appealed to the teachers of Birmingham to set an example to the country of what could be done by developing the nobler traits of human nature, such as gentleness, uprightness, and unselfishness. Referring to the complaints of extravagant expenditure on education, Mr. Bright said 'he would have nothing done for ostentation or for show; but whatever could be done to make education real, to raise the character of our population, and exalt the sentiment of the people,—whatever could be done by the expenditure of money and the devotion and the earnest efforts of good men and good women, like the five hundred or six hundred he saw before him, that he would do and have done.'

One other address, and that an important one, delivered by Mr. Bright in 1879, remains to be dealt with. On the 18th of December he attended a banquet given to Mr. T. B. Potter, M.P., on his return to Rochdale after a visit to the United States. After dwelling at some length on the vastness of the territory and resources of the United States, Mr. Bright said it might be asked, 'What has this great nation done?' Well, they had done a good many things. They had built within the last fifty years not less than 80,000 miles of railway They had during the last twenty years overthrown the gigantic and intolerable evil of slavery, at an enormous cost of blood and of treasure; and in the doing of it they had built up a very large public debt. But the moment the war was over they disbanded their armies; they set themselves steadily to raise their taxes and their revenues; they began to pay off their debt, and in thirteen or fourteen years they had paid off more than a hundred and fifty millions of debt, and by improving their credit by these payments, so that they could borrow more cheaply,

they had reduced the amount of interest payable by the Government to those who had lent them money by an amount not less than eighteen millions a year. Mr. Bright continued as follows :—

'There is, no doubt, a great difference between the United States and countries in Europe, with the exception of one great country—France. They differ from us in sobriety. It is quite true Mr. Potter said he only saw four drunken people in America. Well, but he did not see one emperor. Call it empress or king or queen, or imperial or royal,—these institutions are not the foremost in America; and I have no doubt where men are not intelligent enough and moral enough to maintain a Government like they have in the United States, they may in some particulars still possess great benefits. I think that Mr. Shawcross or Mr. Potter, or both perhaps, said that they had no great army. There are persons who come to England from Germany, France, and Russia who are surprised, and perhaps delighted, to find so few soldiers here compared with some of the European nations. In America they disbanded their great army of a million of men; they have now a force of about 25,000 men. It is not maintained for the purpose of war abroad—nor is it maintained for the purpose of suppressing liberty at home; and yet there is no country which is more universally respected throughout the globe than the United States of America; and there is no country where, on the whole, the laws are better observed, and order more steadily maintained. Another thing in which they differ from us is this, they have, as I believe, almost no political treaties. Washington, their first great President, advised them to have no political treaties,—commercial treaties if you like, as much trade as you can have with all countries. They have not followed his advice in that so much as I should like; but in regard to political treaties, in the main they have followed his advice; and yet I believe there is no country with whom other countries are more friendly at this moment than the United States.'

They had no bishops, and no great favoured Church organization, but he (Mr. Bright) did not commiserate them in that. They had also no land monopoly; they had not preferred, as we have preferred in this country, to maintain a thousand great houses and great properties, when we might have had hundreds of thousands of comfortable and happy homesteads adorning the land.

Mr. Bright nevertheless admitted that the American tariff was 'barbarous;' but it was not long since we had a tariff as bad as the United States, and we had a tariff that actually starved our people. Their tariff did nothing of the kind. They had so much food that they were sending it over here by hundreds of shiploads, and their people did not feel their tariff with the sort of pressure in every household that we felt our tariff in this country; and therefore the hostility to it, and the desire to get rid of it or amend it, was not so keen and universal as it was in this country before our Corn Laws were abolished. The Americans, however, were a people of great common sense, and he believed that before long the farmers throughout the Union

would find that the protection under which they sell everything in the cheapest, and buy everything in the dearest market was a system they would no longer support. He did not hope much from the conviction of the Protectionists themselves, but he trusted to the great heart and the great mind of the American nation. Mr. Bright concluded by saying what a grand thing it would be if England and all her colonies and dependencies—including the colonies of the United States—attaining altogether to a population of nearly four hundred millions, would adopt the principle of Free Trade, and set that great example to the world which the world before long must inevitably follow. The influence on the rest of mankind would be enormous. 'With the fall of tariffs by the union of peoples through Free Trade between nations,—with the fall of tariffs, I say, we shall find also that there will be a fall of the military system which now oppresses all the nations of the earth, and which even in this country, in my opinion, dishonours and rejects the Christianity which we profess.'

We have now reached the close of that remarkable series of addresses which Mr. Bright has delivered in recent years upon political, social, and educational questions. There is no one, be he a supporter or be he an opponent of the right hon. gentleman, who will not, in following these addresses, have discovered much material for thought, and it may be some ideas, which, if translated into action, would redound to the advantage and the glory of our common country.

In closing this chapter, we record with regret a heavy domestic calamity which befell Mr. Bright in the year 1878, by the death of his wife. Mrs. Bright died suddenly, on the 13th of May, at their residence of One Ash. On the previous day she was in her usual state of health, and attended the meeting at the Friends' chapel. On the morning of the 13th she was seized with apoplexy, became instantly unconscious, and died in a few minutes. Mr. Bright was in London at the time, but a telegram being immediately sent to him, he arrived at Rochdale in the evening. On the day succeeding Mrs. Bright's death, Her Majesty the Queen sent a telegram from Windsor Castle to Rochdale, expressing her deep sympathy with Mr. Bright in his bereavement. Expressions of sympathy also poured in from all quarters upon Mr. Bright, and from many public bodies.

Mrs. Bright's remains were interred in the burial ground of the Friends' meeting-house, Rochdale, on the 16th of May. In addition to the family and friends, Messrs. Bright's workpeople attended the funeral. As the coffin was borne to the grave, it

was followed by the mourners, at the head of whom was Mr. Bright, with his youngest son on one side, and his sister Mrs. Maclaren, on the other. The Friends have no regularly appointed burial service, the last sad offices for the dead being spontaneously performed. The interment on this occasion was touchingly simple. Precisely at noon the body was lowered into its final resting-place. The coffin, on which were placed three floral wreaths, bore a memorial tablet, with the inscription, 'Margaret Elizabeth Bright, died 13th May, 1878, aged 58 years.' As the body descended, the sobs of some of the mourners were very audible. One who witnessed the melancholy ceremony states that Mr. J. B. Braithwaite, barrister, of London, in a voice indistinct from emotion, delivered—not a prayer over the dead, whose life was a closed book in the keeping of her Maker—but words of consolation to the living. Meanwhile Mr. Bright was so overcome with emotion that he clasped his son around the neck and leaned upon him for support. Mr. W. E. Turner, of Liverpool, gave utterance to the thought which the occasion inspired, taking several passages of Scripture for his theme. Mr. Bright then walked to the edge of the grave, and looked down upon the coffin with that lingering look which marks the reluctance of the bereaved finally to part with the beloved dead. The assembly afterwards retired into the meeting-house, where further exhortation and prayer were offered, and finally the whole of those present engaged in silent prayer.

The sympathy expressed with Mr. Bright in his profound sorrow was most widespread, extending as well through the ranks of his political antagonists as through those of his more immediate friends in private and public life.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. BRIGHT AND THE UNITED STATES.

Letter from President Hayes to Mr. Bright: Invitation to visit the United States.—Mr. Bright's Reply.

For many years there was an almost universal desire on the part of American citizens that Mr. Bright should visit the United States, where he would assuredly have received such a welcome as has rarely been accorded to any statesman by any people.

The visit, however, was never paid; but in connection with this matter, and as an interesting sequel to Chapter III. of this volume, we are enabled to publish the following hitherto unpublished correspondence between the late President of the United States and Mr. Bright. The first letter, from President Hayes, is as follows:—

'Executive Mansion, Washington,
July 14, 1879.

'My dear Sir,

'The people of this country have from time to time indulged the hope that your public duties at home might admit of your paying a visit to this kindred nation across the sea, and that your personal inclinations might not dissuade you from gratifying this hope. I need not say that at any time this many years your eminence in the public life of your own country would have ensured you a most cordial reception from our people. It will not, I am sure, seem either unnatural or displeasing to you that this title to our respect should be heightened by the appreciation of the great value to us of your opinions and their courageous maintenance during the stress upon our Constitution and free Government, through which we have now, it may be hoped, completely passed.

'I trust that an impression I have received that you are now entertaining the purpose of making this visit is well founded. It will give Mrs. Hayes and myself the greatest pleasure to receive you as our guest at Washington, at such time and as long as may comport with your own comfort and convenience; and you will find in all parts of the country a disposition to

make your stay with us in all respects agreeable to your own wishes in respect to the measure and the modes of our hospitality.

I am, my dear Sir,

Very truly yours,

R. B. HAYES.

'The Right Hon. John Bright, M.P.'

The following was Mr. Bright's reply to this invitation:—

'ONE ASH, ROCHDALE,
August 14, 1879.

'My dear Sir,

'I have received your very kind letter of the 14th of July. The delay in acknowledging the receipt of it, and in replying to it, has arisen from my wish not to write hastily what might be an unexpected if not an ungracious answer.

'I regret very much that I have not, in years that are gone, visited the United States; my public occupations, and the circumstances or conditions of my home life, have interfered with my wishes, and I have not been able to cross the Atlantic. And now, when your letter reaches me, I feel myself unable to avail myself of your great kindness, and to accept the great honour you offer me. I seem to have reached the age when voyages and travel have not only lost their charm, but are become burdensome even to the thought, and when I dare not undertake to meet the expressions of goodwill which I am assured would await me from my friends in your country. I have suffered much during the past year from the heaviest of all domestic bereavements, and I have lost, for a time, at least, the spirit and the energy which are needful to make a visit to America useful or pleasant.

'You refer to the course I took during the great trial through which your country passed from 1860 to 1865. I was anxious that your continent should be the home of freedom, and that, as respects your country and my own, although we are two nations, we should be only one people. Hence I rejoice now in your union, your freedom, and your growing influence and prosperity.

'I know not if I may ever visit your great country; I should be sanguine now to expect it. But whether I do or not, I shall ever feel grateful for the kindness shown to me by so many of her people, and for the unexpected honour which your letter has conferred upon me.

'May I thank Mrs. Hayes and yourself for the invitation to be your guest at Washington, and deeply regret that I am not able to accept the hospitality you so kindly offer me.

'Wishing you all success and honour in your great office, I am,

With profound respect,

Very sincerely yours,

JOHN BRIGHT.

'The Hon. R. B. Hayes,
The President, Washington, U. S. A.'

CHAPTER XIV.

PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES—1875-80.

Mr. Gladstone's Temporary Retirement from the Liberal Leadership.—Lord Hartington elected as his Successor.—The Session of 1875.—Dr. Kenealy and the Tichborne Claimant.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—Dr. Kenealy's Motion against the Judges.—A Singular Division.—Mr. Bright on the Burials Bill.—The Prince of Wales's Visit to India.—The Irish Franchise.—Elementary Education.—Women's Suffrage.—The Sunday Liquor Traffic in Ireland.—The County Franchise.—Mr. Bright on Parliamentary Reporting.—Capital Punishment.—On Indian Famines.—Settlement of the Burials Question.—The Management of King Edward the Sixth's Grammar School, Birmingham.—Indian Debate in 1879.—The Bright Clauses in the Irish Land Act.—Mr. Bright on Agricultural Depression.—Motion on the Irish Franchise in 1880.—Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Local Option Resolution.

SHORTLY before the opening of the session of 1875, Mr. Gladstone retired from the leadership of the Liberal party—though happily the retirement was only of a temporary character. Mr. Gladstone's decision, which naturally caused great regret to the party, was made known to Earl Granville in a letter dated the 12th of January. There were many who regarded it as a stupendous misfortune that Mr. Gladstone should thus retire from the service of the country which owed to him more than to any man living, and at least as much as any Premier in her constitutional history. Warm tributes of sympathy and regard were paid to him on all hands; and the press, with remarkable unanimity, deplored his decision, while not challenging his right to spend the closing years of his life as he wished.

The Liberals were considerably embarrassed in their choice of a leader, for there were many statesmen of the second rank who had perhaps almost equal claims to the post. Various names were mentioned, but those whose qualifications were most widely canvassed were Lord Hartington and Mr. Forster. A meeting of Liberal members was held at the Reform Club, on the 3rd of February, for the purpose of electing Mr. Gladstone's successor. Before this date, however, Mr. Forster had formally declined the candidature. All difficulties were consequently removed out of the way. At the meeting, Mr. C. P. Villiers proposed, and Mr. Samuel Morley seconded, the elec-

tion of the Marquis of Hartington. The motion having been adopted unanimously, Lord Frederick Cavendish responded for his brother; and Mr. Bright, who was chairman of the meeting, passed a warm and hearty eulogium upon the new Liberal leader.

There were one or two singular episodes in the session of 1875 in connection with the notorious Tichborne Claimant, and his advocate, Dr. Kenealy. Having been elected for Stoke-upon-Trent, Dr. Kenealy appeared in the House for the purpose of taking his seat. He was unaccompanied, however, by two other members, as is always the case upon the introduction of a new member, and after some discussion this formality was waived. He had not been long in the House before he brought forward a number of notices, questions, and petitions having reference to the Tichborne trial. One of these, called the Prittlewell petition, not only prayed for a free pardon for 'that unhappy nobleman now languishing in prison,' but contained direct charges of unfairness against the three judges, and abuse of the Speaker. Mr. Disraeli moved the dismissal of the petition; but some members were for treating it with contempt. Under great pressure, Dr. Kenealy rose, and said that, having given the notice, he was only waiting to be supported by more petitions from the country before bringing forward a definite motion against the judges.

Mr. Bright, who had acted in a friendly spirit towards Dr. Kenealy since his entry into the House, now delivered a severe philippic against the hon. member. He said that his present course could not be tolerated. 'The hon. gentleman,' he observed, 'has no right to come down to the House and give a notice of this character, to remove it to some other day, then to some other day, and after that to let it remain on the paper without any day being fixed, and then to leave London to visit towns and other parts of the country, and there to make his statement of the question—I will not say to inflame the minds of the people of this country, I will not say to make charges which are false—I will say rather to make statements which he believes it his duty to make. It is not right to make such statements—I will not say to defame, but to charge eminent judges with unfairness, and to create in the mind of the people a belief that men upon their trial before the judges and a jury of this country cannot hope for fair, complete, and open justice. I say he has no right to do that, and to leave a notice of that kind on the paper week after week and month after month; and I think the House ought to insist that a question of this

nature, upon which so much hangs—a question as to the judgment of the House upon the character of eminent judges—ought not to be left undecided. The House ought to take some steps by which it shall either be adjudged or got rid of for ever. I think the hon. member for Stafford (Mr. Macdonald) made a manly declaration. He made an appeal to the hon. member for Stoke which he cannot disregard.' Amidst general cheering from both sides of the House, Mr. Bright continued: 'I protest against this question being left over. If the hon. member had given notice that he was about to bring a vote of censure against a member of the Government, the First Minister would say, "This cannot be allowed to remain week after week. It must be decided. The Government enjoys the confidence of the House, or it does not." But it seems to me even more important if you have three of the most eminent judges of the land, and heap upon them charges of the most grave character. I say that the man who makes those charges, and who hesitates to come forward, and, to the best of his power, substantiate them, at any rate will have no right to say anything against the judges, for however evil may be their character, I suspect his will not bear examination. I conclude by saying, and I say it with no unfriendliness to the hon. member for Stoke, I think I have a fair right to appeal to him to answer my question, and to state to the House whether it is his intention immediately, or on the first convenient day—and I hope the House will be ready to make way for him—to bring this matter before the House, so that it may be fairly discussed; for I am at least as anxious as he is that justice should be done, and that the great mass of the people of this country, whether they take his view or the view of the majority of this House, should have another opportunity of correcting their opinion, and of coming, it may be, to a just decision upon a question which has excited so many of them.'

Driven to bay, Dr. Kenealy was at length forced to bring the question to an issue, and this he did on the 23rd of April, in the shape of a motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the conduct of the trial at bar of the Tichborne case. The mover, after going into the details of the case, especially attacked Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, charging him with misbehaviour so gross as to necessitate a new trial in the interests of truth and justice. The Attorney-General replied to Dr. Kenealy, showing that he had entirely failed to make out a case for a Royal Commission. Mr. Disraeli described the affair as 'altogether an absurd, preposterous, and

most flimsy business.' It was Mr. Bright, however, who most completely exploded the hon. member's charges. He went into the merits of the case on which the Claimant was convicted, and by a straightforward but pitiless and irresistible logic showed how weak was the defence, and how inevitable the conclusion that the Claimant was a rank impostor. 'It is a great public injury,' he observed, 'it is a great wrong, that gentlemen of education, and occupying the position of members of this House, should seek to convince persons who could not by any possibility have had so good an opportunity of judging of the matter as the judges and jury whose conduct is condemned,—I say it is a great evil to teach such persons what I believe to be utterly untrue, that the judges were partial and corrupt, and that the jury were mistaken in the view which they took. Sir, I can take no such view. I can take no part in such conduct. I would uphold the institutions of this country, in the main, as they exist with regard to the administration of justice; I think the poorest in the land has at least as great an interest in that being done as the richest in the land; and it is because I think this, that I cannot for a moment think of giving my vote in favour of the proposition of the hon. member for Stoke.'

The division which followed is probably unparalleled in the annals of the House of Commons. The motion was rejected by 433 votes against 1,—Dr. Kenealy's solitary supporter being Major O'Gorman. The hon. member's co-teller was Mr. Whalley, as ardent an admirer of and a believer in the Claimant as he was a hater of the Pope.

During this session, Mr. Bright spoke on the occasion of the second reading of Mr. Osborne Morgan's Burials Bill. He pointed out that all persons had a right to use the parochial burying ground when their friends came to be buried. These grounds were the property of the parish—they were plots of ground in which the parishioners generally had a pecuniary interest. But those who dissented from the Church could only be buried in the parish graveyard upon certain conditions. They must have a certain service read over them, or none at all. He asked why this test should be imposed upon one-half of the population? They had abolished tests for holding offices, and many other tests—then why adhere to this?—for it was no other than a test. Having described the simple burial service of the Friends, where any one was allowed to pray or to offer a word of exhortation if he felt it his duty to do so, Mr. Bright said: 'But if this were done in one of your graveyards

—if, for example, such a thing were done there, and a member of my sect, or a Baptist, an Independent, or a Wesleyan, came to be interred in one of your graveyards, and if some God-fearing and good man there spoke some word of exhortation, or on his knees offered a prayer to God, is there one of you on this side of the House or on that, or one of your clergymen, or any thoughtful and Christian man connected with your Church, who would dare in the sight of Heaven to condemn that, or to interfere with it by force of law? The proposition as reduced to a simple case like that is monstrous and intolerable, and I believe the time will come when men will never believe that such a thing could have been seriously discussed in the House of Commons.' They were doing harm to the Church of England by maintaining this test. Why should not the English Nonconformists have full toleration in this matter, when the exclusive system was unknown in Scotland, and had been abolished in Ireland? Ill effects had been prophesied from the abolition of Church-rates, but these ill effects had not come. Voluntary effort had done more for the Church than any law that Parliament could ever discuss or pass. This was a political question, as the Church-rate was a political question; and if they could once get rid of party discussion, and consider this matter as men—whether Nonconformists or Churchmen—anxious for that brotherly kindness and that peace inculcated upon all men alike by the precepts of their common Christianity, they would have no difficulty in agreeing to the present bill.

Notwithstanding Mr. Bright's speech, however, which had a considerable effect upon the House, the bill was lost by the narrow majority of 14—the numbers being, for the second reading, 234; against, 248.

When Mr. Disraeli proposed the grant in connection with the Prince of Wales's visit to India, Mr. Bright spoke in the course of the discussion, and said that as the visit had received the consent of the Queen, and had been considered and approved by Ministers, he was willing to believe, as he most strongly hoped, that the visit was a wise one, and one that would tend in the main to useful purposes, both for England and India. As to the character of the visit, the Prince could not go to India with a single portmanteau and a carpet bag; and he (Mr. Bright) inclined to the mode of travelling which the Government had proposed. If it was any other of the sons of the Queen, the case would be somewhat different; but the Prince of Wales was the heir-apparent to the throne of these kingdoms,

and they could not, in his travels through India, divest him of that character and that position. He ought to go in such state as should commend itself to the ideas, the sympathies, and wishes of the population he was about to see. The Prince could not make the people of India forget that they were a subject population, but there were influences which he might employ, and there were circumstances which might arise, that might have a beneficial effect upon the public mind in that country. The Prince was kindly, courteous, and generous, whereas the English rulers in India were not always kind and courteous to the native population. 'I rose,' concluded Mr. Bright, 'for the purpose of saying that although I had some doubts, and although it is impossible to say and believe that the journey of the Prince of Wales will turn the current of feeling on great political questions in the minds of the natives of India, yet I think that in all probability by his conduct—his personal conduct,—his kindness, his courtesy, his generosity, and his sympathy with that great people over whom it may at no distant period be his tremendous responsibility to rule, he may leave behind him memories that may be of exceeding value, and equal in influence to the greatest measures of State policy which any Government could propound.'

There were many questions of importance introduced in the session of 1876, upon which Mr. Bright addressed the House. The subject of Reform for Ireland was brought forward by Mr. Meldon on the 28th of March, upon a motion for the assimilation of the borough franchise in England and Ireland. Mr. Meldon showed, from rating and other causes, how large numbers of the Irish people, especially in the towns, were disfranchised. While opposing the motion, Sir M. H. Beach admitted the future necessity of dealing with the franchise in Ireland. Mr. Bright concluded the debate in a very effective speech, which showed that he had lost none of his power of commanding the attention of the House. It was remarked, indeed, that the brief speeches which he delivered on the Burials Bill in the former session, and on this occasion, were among the most successful of his shorter oratorical efforts. In supporting Mr. Meldon's motion, Mr. Bright showed that household suffrage had not been a terrible thing for England, and that it could not be a dangerous thing for Ireland. 'I believe,' he said, 'that if a measure of this kind were passed it would have the effect in Ireland—it must inevitably have the effect of teaching the Irish people that the Imperial Parliament is not only not afraid of them, but actually invites their co-operation. It invites every

man of them, every householder in boroughs, to take an interest in the political questions which are constantly debated in this House; and I am satisfied that, if you ask them to become partners in the discussions and deliberations of this assembly, it would make them think that it will not be necessary for them to have a small Parliament of their own in Ireland, seeing that this greater Parliament is willing to do them speedy and substantial justice. It remains to be true—though all the officials in the world think it worth while to call it in question—that justice done by the Government and Parliament to any portion of the population, be it the most remote, be it the most abject, still that measure of justice is never lost. It is compensated to the power that grants it, be it monarch or be it Parliament, by greater affection, by greater and firmer allegiance to the law, and by the growth of all those qualities and virtues by which a great and durable nation is distinguished.' To Mr. Bright's advocacy of the resolution was probably due the closeness of the division, the Government escaping defeat only by the small majority of 13. The numbers were—for the motion, 166; against, 179.

A Bill to amend the Elementary Education Act had been promised by the Government for this session, but in consequence of the protracted debates on the Royal Titles Bill it could not be introduced in the Commons until the middle of May. Meanwhile Mr. Dixon, one of the members for Birmingham, brought in an Elementary Education Bill of his own, and the debate on the second reading took place on the 5th of April. The principal objects of the measure were to enforce universal compulsory attendance at school, and to establish universal compulsory school boards. Mr. Bright said he agreed with much that had been urged during the debate against giving too high an education to the children of the labouring classes, and laid it down that it would be sufficient to teach children to read so as to comprehend what they read, to write so that what they wrote could be read, and so much arithmetic as would enable them to keep their accounts. The opposition to school boards he held to be a mere hobgoblin, and, as the system had succeeded so admirably in towns, there was no reason why it should not be extended to the rural districts. As to the expense, everything cost something, and the people could not be educated for nothing; while the horror of increasing local taxation was an entire mistake, which was due, he believed, to ignorance and political motives. The school board system had hitherto been most efficacious in carrying out the principle of compulsion, which seemed

now to be generally accepted; but he was not wedded to it, and if the Vice-President would only state what other plan he had to propose, he promised him an impartial consideration of it from the Liberal side. Lord Sandon, in closing the debate, protested against the conjunction of the cause of education with what he declared to be the fatal principle of universal school boards. Mr. Dixon's bill was lost by 281 votes to 160. The Government bill, which was introduced at a later period, led to many warm debates, its main proposals being considered 'reactionary' by the Opposition. The strongest contest arose over an amendment by Mr. Pell—accepted by the Government—providing for the dissolution of all school boards which possessed neither schools nor sites. Mr. Bright said that if the clause passed it would be widely accepted as the signal for the reopening of a question which was settled in 1870, and it would stir up intolerance and hostility in many parishes. The clause, however, was carried, the Government being supported all through on this question by an obedient majority. In Committee, Mr. Bright made another attempt to modify the objectionable new clause of Mr. Pell, by proposing to add to it the words, 'In every case where a school board shall be dissolved under this clause, all the powers conferred upon it by and under the Elementary Education Act, 1870, shall be transferred to and continue under the local authority of the parish or district for educational purposes created under this Act.' Mr. Bright said that if the state of things which this clause would produce in districts where school boards were abolished could be made general throughout the country, the whole object of Parliamentary legislation on this great question would be thwarted and entirely put an end to. Gentlemen opposite had never advocated justice to the Dissenting population of England and Wales; the time would come, however, when the judgment of Parliament, backed by an intelligent and free people, would reverse the unfavourable judgment to which that night they might come. The Government opposed the amendment, and it was rejected by 100 votes to 63. The Bill eventually passed through both Houses, and became a law.

Mr. Bright is opposed to the extension of the suffrage to women. On the motion for the second reading of Mr. Forsyth's Women's Disabilities Removal Bill, taken on the 26th of April, 1876, he spoke against the measure. He confessed that he had changed his vote on this question, for he had voted with Mr. Mill in 1867. He had not really changed his opinion, however, though on one occasion he had voted with Mr. Mill out of gene-

ral sympathy for him rather than from a conviction that he was right on this question. He thus concluded a very forcible speech:—

'My sympathies have always been in favour of a wide suffrage. They are so at this moment, and I grieve very much that a measure should be submitted to this House in favour of the extension of the suffrage to which I cannot give my support. But I confess I am unwilling, for the sake of women themselves, to introduce them into the contest of our Parliamentary system, to bring them under the necessity of canvassing themselves or being canvassed by others. (*Hear, hear.*) I think they would lose much of that, or some of that, which is best that they now possess, and that they would gain no good of any kind from being mingled or mixed with Parliamentary contests and the polling-booth. I should vote for this measure if I were voting solely in the interests of the men; I shall vote against it, I believe with perfect honesty, believing that in so doing I am serving the interests of women themselves. (*Cheers.*) I recollect that an hon. member who voted for this bill last year in conversation with me next day said he had very great doubts upon the matter, because he believed that the best women were against it. Well, I find wherever I go that all the best women seem to be against this bill. If the House believes that it cannot vote justly for our mothers, our sisters, our wives, and our daughters, the House may abdicate and pass this bill: but I believe that Parliament cannot be otherwise—unless it be in ignorance—than just to the women of this country, with whom we are so intimately allied. Believing that, and having these doubts—doubts which are stronger even than I have been able to express, and doubts which have come upon me stronger and stronger the more I have considered this question—I am obliged, differing from many of those whom I care for, and whom I love, to give my vote in opposition to this measure.' (*Cheers.*)

The bill was lost by a majority of 87, the numbers being—for the second reading, 152; against, 239.

On the 12th of May, 1876, Mr. R. Smyth brought forward a resolution in the House of Commons, proposing to stop the sale of intoxicating liquors on Sunday in Ireland. The hon. member showed by statistics that drunkenness was increasing in Ireland, and that this measure was universally desired. Sir M. Hicks-Beach, on behalf of the Government, proposed a compromise. He offered, if Mr. Smyth would withdraw his motion, to recommend the further restriction of the hours of opening on Sundays to two to five in the country, and two to seven in towns. Mr. Bright gave his warm adhesion to the resolution. He considered that the unanimity of all classes on this question was unparalleled, and described the proposed Government compromise as a mere nibbling at a great evil, and a falling back from the offer of the previous year. 'The Irish people plead in no uncertain voice; but say distinctly what you should do on this occasion. Those who resist are not the people of England, but the publicans of England. Have we not all received papers from English publicans and their associations?

Do they not tell us what we should do in their matter? Have they not told Her Majesty's Ministers in no uncertain voice what they ought to do in this matter? It has come to this—Government must choose this day whom you will serve. Will you serve the conspiracy of the vendors of drink in England, or will you obey the will and the eloquent voice of the whole people of Ireland?' Mr. Gladstone also pressed the House not to neglect the unanimous desire of the Irish people; and on a division the resolution was carried against the Government by 224 votes to 167. The result was hailed with loud cheering by the Opposition. A bill was afterwards introduced, founded upon the resolution; but after passing its second reading, it was talked out at a later stage by Mr. Callan, for which feat he was generally and severely condemned.

Mr. Trevelyan's motion, in 1876, for the extension of the county franchise, brought forward on the 30th of May, was opposed by Mr. Lowe, who said he feared that in the extremity of our prosperity and happiness we should not be satisfied until we had pulled down by our own hand the noblest fabric of liberty and justice that human hands ever raised, or human folly ever destroyed. Mr. Bright, in supporting the motion, said that some of the top stones of the noble fabric referred to by Mr. Lowe were the very stones against which the right hon. gentleman had protested ten years before. Having traced the recent history of Reform, Mr. Bright said it was admitted by every one that the results of what was done in 1867 with regard to the borough franchise had been satisfactory, and given no cause whatever for alarm. If they now extended the same suffrage to the counties, it would be the best means of putting an end to an apprehended agitation for manhood or universal suffrage. The ignorance of the agricultural population was lessening every day; their independence was increasing; and there was a gradual but general movement in the direction of asking that they should be placed on an equality with their fellow-countrymen in the towns. 'It is not a party question,' said Mr. Bright. 'There is scarcely a member on the other side of the House with whom I have spoken on this question who has not said that it cannot be put off for very long; and when the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government proposes that it shall be done, no doubt it will be accepted and adopted by an overwhelming majority even in this House. And when it is done, a great thing will be done. We shall have the counties put in as favourable a position for legislation on their behalf as the boroughs occupy now. The

freedom of the towns will be extended to the counties, and we shall have what I fear is a great amount of social tyranny in the counties broken up. We shall have what I have described as the paralysis of half the political interests and power of the country removed and healed, and we shall have the industry, the intelligence, and the freedom of both town and country brought to combine in the election of a really free Parliament, that shall be a credit and a permanent safeguard to a great and a free people.' Mr. Disraeli opposed the motion, and it was defeated by a majority of 99, the numbers being—for Mr. Trevelyan's resolution, 165; against, 264.

Twice during the session of 1877 Mr. Bright spoke on questions which excited considerable interest. The first of these speeches was delivered in connection with a proposal made by Mr. Hanbury Tracy, that the debates of the House should be officially reported. It was shown during the discussion that, with the exception of the *Times* and the *Standard*, the newspapers were ceasing to report the debates at length, that nothing was reported after 12.30 a.m., and that the public appetite for debates was diminishing. Mr. Gladstone supported the proposal, on the ground that reporting was declining. Mr. Bright took a similar view. He said that the reports of the debates in Parliament were not only shorter than they once were, but also that they were much worse. It was therefore advisable to have an inquiry into the matter. Newspapers found their profit very much more from what they contained of advertisements than of Parliamentary debates; therefore speeches went to the wall. He did not, however, believe that there was less interest now than formerly in reading Parliamentary debates; but except on very stirring occasions the newspaper record of the debates was very deficient. The grievance would increase with every year, and they would be compelled before long to make the inquiry asked for. Members would require as an historical record, and for their own reference, some record of the debates more satisfactory than the present lame and impotent reports. He did not agree with Mr. Beresford-Hope that an adequate report of the debates would vastly enlarge the extent of talking; but if there should be a disposition on the part of any member to speak too often and too long, the House had its remedy in its own hands. A committee would devise the best mode of solving the present difficulty. Sir S. Northcote opposed the motion, on the ground that it would tend to multiply speeches addressed to constituents, etc.; and in the end the proposition was defeated by a vote

of 152 to 28. Many of the newspapers, in commenting upon this decision, expressed an opinion that the existing reports were ample for the requirements of their readers; but some of the ablest of the weekly journals feared that the tendency of the House to become 'an unreported debating club' might result in weakening its hold upon the country.

The other occasion on which Mr. Bright rose this session was in connection with the abolition of capital punishment. Sir J. Eardley Wilmot having introduced a motion for the reconsideration of the law of murder, Mr. Pease moved an amendment for the abolition of the punishment of death. The latter hon. gentleman brought forward some remarkable statistics in support of his amendment. Mr. Bright—who, as we have seen, had already delivered many speeches during his career upon this question—once more spoke eloquently against capital punishment, and upon the special horror of the English method. He observed that in this respect our law had always been more barbarous and more cruel than that of any Christian State of which he had been able to inform himself. We committed a mistake which a hundred years to come, men would point to as one of the most extraordinary mistakes a Legislature could commit, when we endeavoured to promote the sacredness of human life and the reverence for human life by destroying it in cold blood, and by one of the most barbarous methods which the most barbarous nations ever employed. Mr. Bright argued that the substitution of private for public execution had only given a new field to the reporters. In former times they told us all about the crowd, and how the street was filled with spectators; but now in a space perhaps not half the size of that room, they saw every line of the convict's countenance, they saw his troubled eyes, the pallor on his cheek, the terror in every limb; and all that was given, with the embellishments which newspaper writers were so well able to add; and these details were carried into every house. He believed that the executions were exerting an influence as evil, sometimes even more evil, upon the public mind than they did in times when they were enacted under the canopy of heaven and before the faces of thousands of the people. 'I have spoken,' said Mr. Bright, 'to a Home Secretary on questions of this nature, and I have told him, in respect of a particular case, "You know if you hang this man there is no other Christian country in the world in which he would be hung." He did not deny it,—it was a matter notorious; and I have seen him burst into tears; I have seen the tears rolling down his cheeks, and himself greatly agitated

with the burden upon his conscience, which he knew not how to shift from it, the law having compelled him to decide this case,—his sympathy carrying him one way, and his fear of not doing what the law required compelling him the other. The time, I say, is surely coming when we shall have a Home Secretary who shall revolt against the terrible duty thus imposed upon him, and when we shall have a Parliament, too, which shall raise itself to the height of this great argument, and will believe that Christian law is of more worth than the barbarism that comes only with heathen times. And I hope the time will come when we shall show to all other nations that whatever England has been heretofore in the barbarous nature of her punishments, now at last she takes another course, and instead of being the last she will be foremost in that path which leads from the blind cruelties of the past to the wise and just mercies of the future. With all my heart and soul I shall give my vote in favour of the amendment of my hon. friend the member for South Durham.' At the close of the debate, the House rejected both the original motion and the amendment.

Early in the session of 1878, Lord George Hamilton, Under Secretary of State for India, brought forward a motion connected with the construction of public works in India. Mr. Fawcett moved an amendment further to inquire into the causes and the mitigation of frequent famines, as well as the burdensome taxation imposed upon the people of India. Mr. Bright spoke during the discussion. 'Talk of this savage and destructive war now waging in the east of Europe,' he said; 'we hear of thousands being slaughtered; but all that that war has done, and all that the wars of the past ten years have done, has not been equal, in the destruction of human life, to the destruction caused by the famines which have occurred in the great dependency of the English Crown in India. Having recapitulated recent history on this question, and referred to his own efforts, he concluded by remarking, 'If famine comes from want of water, clearly to get rid of famine you must have water. You cannot have water except by works of irrigation. You have the rain from heaven; you have the great rivers; and you have a great Government, which has conquered the country, and which, having conquered it, at least ought to exercise all the powers of its intellect for the purpose of saving its people from this suffering and this ruin, and ought to save this Parliament and this country from the degradation and humiliation of allowing it to be known throughout the world that millions of

the subjects of the Crown in India, in the course of ten years, perish by famine, which great engineers and men of character and experience say positively might altogether have been prevented.' Mr. Fawcett withdrew his amendment upon Lord George Hamilton revising his resolution, which was now adopted by the House, as follows: 'That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report as to the expediency of constructing public works in India with money raised on loan, both as regards financial results and the prevention of famine.'

In the session of 1878 Mr. Osborne Morgan made another unsuccessful attempt to settle the Burials question, moving by way of resolution. Mr. Bright again spoke vigorously on the question, referring to the condition of panic into which the friends of the Established Church had thrown themselves, and insisting upon the groundlessness of their fears. The question, he said, was as good as won by the supporters of this measure, and the battle was pretty nearly as good as lost on the other. He demanded this act of justice on behalf of that half of the nation who believed themselves to be injured. The resolution was only lost by the narrow majority of 15, in a House composed of 469 members. This vexed question was at length set at rest by the passing of a bill in the session of 1880. When the second reading came on in this latter year, Mr. Beresford-Hope moved the rejection of the bill. A long debate ensued, in the course of which Mr. Bright delivered a speech full of humour and pathos. As one of the daily journals observed, he was in a quiet and playful but most effective vein. Mr. Talbot had said something very stupid about Wales; and Mr. Bright retorted by a remark on his ignorance, which was more relished by the Ministerialists than by the member for Oxford. This was followed up by a similarly severe remark upon the 'grotesque' humour of Mr. Beresford-Hope; and he made use of that gentleman's jokes to prove that the Conservatives were marching to portentous doom in the highest of spirits. An allusion to Mr. Mowbray led to the concluding observation as to the want of political education in the members for the universities, which elicited loud laughter at the expense of the said members. Mr. Bright denied the assertion that this bill led to disestablishment; and in pointing out how burial in the parish church might lead the surviving relative to affection for the parish church, he told—in beautiful language and a lowered voice that hushed the House—a story of an old man who used to visit every Sunday the grave of his wife. He left the general question of disestablishment to time; and

finally urged acceptance of the bill for the sake of having a settlement of this vexatious question. He even professed his readiness to accept the clause which put him, as an unbaptized person, in the same category as suicides and criminals, rather than imperil the chances of the bill. The House felt that the time had come for a settlement of this long controversy, and the second reading of the bill was carried by 258 to 79. The result elicited loud cheering. The measure subsequently passed through both Houses and became law.

Mr. Meldon again brought forward, in the session of 1881, his proposition in favour of the assimilation of the borough franchise of Ireland with that of England. Mr. Bright said that all the policy and all the measures of the party opposite in respect to Ireland had failed, and all their foretellings and prophecies had proved false. He called upon the House to consent to the proposition now submitted to it. The division was a very narrow one, the resolution being defeated by eight votes out of a total of 260.

On the 5th of March, 1878, Mr. Bright drew the attention of the House of Commons to the scheme of the Endowed Schools Commissioners for the management of King Edward the Sixth's Grammar School in Birmingham—one of the most flourishing institutions in the country. The right hon. gentleman proposed an address to Her Majesty, praying her to withhold her assent to the scheme. The point which he desired to call the attention of members to was the constitution of the governing body. The people of Birmingham objected to the scheme of the Charity Commissioners on this amongst other grounds—that whereas the school had been free for three hundred years, it was now proposed to establish a system of fees. As to the governing body, what the corporation and the people of Birmingham objected to was that the majority, which by the scheme of 1873 was to be given to the corporation and the school board, was now reduced to a minority, the school board being entirely got rid of. The co-optative members were increased by one, and three members were to be appointed by Oxford, Cambridge, and London Universities. The public of Birmingham would prefer that the three proposed university members should be elected and appointed by the corporation. The course taken by the Charity Commissioners was humiliating and somewhat offensive to the town of Birmingham, whose corporation and institutions were in a flourishing condition. The motion was seconded by Mr. Chamberlain, who, after pointing out the public spirit in Birmingham, insisted that the

town ought to have the management of its own school. Several members spoke against Mr. Bright's resolution, but it was further supported by Mr. Muntz. The hon. gentleman said the school was doing enormous good, and they were going to put a stop to it. His remark that it was useless to argue with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, seeing the majority at his back, was speedily justified, for the House decided against Mr. Bright's motion by a majority of 59.

India was a prominent topic of discussion in the session of 1879, and on the 18th of February Mr. Fawcett called attention to the inadequate control exercised over the revenues of the great Eastern dependency, and moved for a Committee to inquire into and report upon the operation of the Government of India Act, 1858, and subsequent enactments. The motion was discussed at length. Mr. Grant Duff denied that want of financial control was one of the evils from which India suffered; if there was anything wrong, it arose from errors in policy. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that if opportunity arose for the appointment of a Committee to inquire into the general administration of Indian affairs, such a thing might be advantageous, but he could not consent to an inquiry on the basis of the present motion. Mr. Bright spoke with much power, regretting the decision of the Government not to grant the Committee, inasmuch as the condition of Indian affairs, pressing for the attention of the House and the Government, had been shown to be of the most serious character. The words of the motion, as he understood them, referred not merely to finance, but to the whole Government of India, and the sooner the Committee was appointed the better. The difficulties of the position in India had been aggravated by the recent policy of the Government, and he was surprised at the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had sat at the feet of Mr. Gladstone, and who at least knew his multiplication table—though he had known some Ministers who did not—should ever have consented to it. Whatever changes it might be found necessary to introduce into the administration of India, he believed that reforms in India would be of more consequence than any changes which could be made in the form of the Home Government. He continued of the opinion, which he expressed many years ago, that it was impossible for a Viceroy, with half a dozen councillors, to govern the whole of India; the country ought to be divided into half a dozen independent Governments, each directly responsible to the Secretary of State at home. Though he did not agree with Mr. Fawcett as to the value of the Council, he voted for the motion

because he understood it to apply to the whole of Indian administration. On a division, the motion was negatived by 139 to 100 votes.

On the House of Commons going into Committee of Supply on the 2nd of May, 1879, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre moved a resolution asserting the expediency of legislating without further delay to increase the facilities offered by the Purchase clauses of the Irish Land Act. He pointed out that though the Purchase clauses of the Church Act had succeeded, those of the Land Act had been to a great extent a failure. This he attributed in a great measure to the fact that the working of the Act had been placed in the hands of persons who had no interest in its success. The most effectual remedy was for the State to step in and take the management. Mr. Gladstone said he hoped this would not be made a party question, for it was a moral, social, and political claim, going to the heart of the Irish question. Many other members, chiefly Irish, having spoken, Mr. Bright rose and eulogized the Land Act, which he affirmed would never have been passed if both Houses had not been convinced of the dangerous condition of the country. At the same time he admitted that the Act had only been partial, and the remedy was incomplete, as it did not go to the origin of the evil. The disproportion between the numbers of the holders and owners of land in Ireland was so great as to be intolerable. The consequence was a growing claim for a greater security of tenure, and demands were made which were probably not altogether sound. This particular provision contained no new principle; it had been sanctioned by Parliament in 1870 without a division, and a measure might be carried this session which would tend to create a loyal and contented class of the population. Sir Stafford Northcote, on behalf of the Government, promised to make a proposal for removing some of the difficulties which impeded the operation of the Purchase clauses, and ultimately the resolution was agreed to.

On the 4th of July, in the same session, Mr, Chaplin moved for a Royal Commission to inquire into the depressed condition of the agricultural interest, and the causes to which it was owing; whether those causes were of a temporary or of a permanent character, and how far they had been created or could be remedied by legislation. Mr. T. Brassey seconded the motion, but said the exploded doctrines of Protection should be excluded from the discussion of the Commission. An animated debate arose, in the course of which Mr. Bright spoke. Without urging the Government to refuse the Commission, he charged

the Conservatives with standing in fear of the English-speaking nation on the other side of the Atlantic, He did not suppose, however, that they wished to see the agricultural labourer go back to the position from which he had been raised by Free Trade; and he believed, as he hoped, that those who desired to return to that refuge of cowardice, idleness, and greed—the protective system, would be disappointed. Having complained of the silence of the proposers of this investigation as to what they expected from it, Mr. Bright warned them that, the door being once opened, it could not be closed until complete inquiry had been made. If appointed, the Commission must inquire into the gigantic monopoly of the present ownership in land, and ascertain why landlords and farmers viewed with alarm, and even with terror, the arrival in this country of corn and cattle from places many thousand miles across the Atlantic. It would increase the price of land here, he was convinced, if the ancient, stupid, and mischievous legislation which embarrassed every step in dealing with it were abolished; and he demanded that this inquiry should be wide and open. Above all, he would break down the monopoly which had banished so much labour from the farms, and pauperized what remained. Ultimately, Mr. Chaplin's motion was agreed to without a division.

The question of the Irish franchise was yet again brought before the House of Commons on the 17th of February, 1880, when Mr. Meldon moved a resolution declaring that it deserved the immediate attention of Parliament. Mr. C. E. Lewis moved as an amendment that it was inexpedient to deal with the question. A prolonged debate ensued, in the course of which Sir W. Harcourt strongly condemned Mr. Lewis's attack upon the Irish people. The Attorney-General for Ireland said it was impossible to disturb the Irish franchise without raising the question of the redistribution of seats, and, on the whole, there was no urgency in this matter. Mr. Bright began a brief but spirited speech by remarking that these were the arguments by which household suffrage had been resisted in this country; and if there were no special agitation in Ireland on this question, it was one of a bundle of grievances which demanded redress. But the real reason why the party opposite resisted this extension of the franchise, was that they feared the opinions which would be represented, although those opinions, as he showed, were the natural result of long years of Conservative government. Mr. Meldon's motion did not, of course, commend itself to the Conservative party, and on a division it was negatived by 242 to 188.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson, who had frequently brought forward his Permissive Bill in the House of Commons, varied his course on the Temperance question on the 6th of March, 1880, by bringing forward a resolution in favour of local option. He acknowledged that he hoped to catch votes by his resolution, which simply meant that the people should be enabled to protect themselves from the evils of drinking. Mr. Burt seconded the motion; and Mr. Gladstone said he could not vote against it, though he had never yet heard of a plan to give effect to local option which it would not be premature at present to lay before Parliament. He regretted that the opportunity had been lost of trying the Gothenburg system. Amongst other speakers was Mr. Bright, who said he had always opposed the Permissive Bill, but it had disappeared, probably never to appear again; and he denied altogether that the House would be committed to that impossible measure by accepting this resolution. All that the House would do would be to express an opinion condemning the present system, suggesting a new one, and calling on the Government to submit a measure which would embody some kind of local control on the granting of licences. The present system was admitted to be deficient; the magistrates were irresponsible, and in towns at least he thought the power might be transferred to the corporations. When the House divided, the resolution was negatived by 248 to 134.

This was the last of Mr. Bright's appearances in Opposition, for three days after this debate Parliament was dissolved, under circumstances which will be detailed in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1880.

Causes which led to the Dissolution of 1880.—Opening of the Birmingham Liberal Club.—Speeches of Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Bright.—Brilliant Attack on the Government.—Meeting of the Birmingham Junior Liberal Association.—Address by Mr. Bright.—The Zulu and Afghan Wars.—Dissolution of Parliament.—Manifesto by the Premier.—English Ascendency in Europe.—The Liberal Leaders and Lord Beaconsfield's Letter to the Duke of Marlborough.—The General Election.—The Contest in Birmingham.—Reception and Speeches of Mr. Bright.—Interview with the Licensed Victuallers.—The County Franchise and the Land Question.—Result of the Poll at Birmingham.—Great Liberal Triumph.—Enormous Liberal Majority in the Country.—Mr. Gladstone called to power.—Mr. Bright again accepts Office.—Re-election with Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham.

A GENERAL belief in the early dissolution of Parliament had been current before this important step was formally announced by the Premier. The Beaconsfield Administration had been called to power ostensibly on two leading grounds—one of a negative and the other of a positive character. With regard to the former of these, it was understood that the new Ministry would abandon what had been described as the 'harassing domestic policy' of Mr. Gladstone's Government; while as to the second, it would assume a definite and spirited course on foreign affairs. The country, however, began to weary of our constant embroilment in foreign quarrels, and of the restless war policy which actuated the Ministry, and which had been pursued to the complete detriment of domestic legislation. Mr. Gladstone's campaign in Midlothian in the autumn of 1879—during which he exhibited marvellous powers of eloquence and physical endurance—was greatly instrumental in turning the tide of popular feeling against the Government; and by the beginning of 1880 it was admitted on all hands that the dissolution could not be much longer delayed.

Mr. Bright attended the opening of the Birmingham Liberal Club on the 20th of January, 1880, and in his speech made anticipatory allusions to the dissolution, which he also, in conjunction with the chief of the Liberal party, had for many months been looking forward to. The banquet in connection with the opening of the club was very brilliant and successful. It was held in the Town Hall, the Mayor, Mr. R. Chamberlain, presid-

ing; and amongst those present were Mr. Bright (President of the Club), Sir William Harcourt, M.P., Mr. Chamberlain, M.P., Lord Lyttelton, the Earl of Camperdown, Sir J. Swinburne, and the following members of Parliament, in addition to those above named: Messrs. M. A. Bass, T. Lea, C. C. Cotes, H. Bass, R. Edge, T. P. Hill, C. Harrison, T. Blake, J. C. Clarke, and A. Brogden.

Sir W. Harcourt proposed the toast of the evening, 'The Health of the new Liberal Club of Birmingham.' In the course of his speech he attacked the Government with great wit and sarcasm, his numerous points being received with continuous laughter and applause. He justified the opposition of the Liberal party to the foreign policy of the Government, and contended that during the administrations both of Lord Palmerston and of Mr. Gladstone the Conservatives exercised the right to criticise and condemn the policy of their opponents. He (Sir William) did not complain of them for this; what he did complain of was 'the impudent fiction that they had never done that which was their constant practice.' He had been taken to task for daring to jest at such virtuous and excellent men as the members of Her Majesty's Government—a charge which all must admit came with crushing force from the followers and admirers of Lord Beaconsfield; but the humour of the situation was their creation, not his. Ministers did the most absurd thing in the world, and then expected that they would not laugh at them because they were Ministers.

Mr. Bright spoke at some length in response to the toast proposed by Sir W. Harcourt, his speech consisting chiefly of a review of the political history of the last fifty years. In trenchant language he traced the course of the reforms which had been achieved; but as the substance of his inspiriting recital has been given in preceding chapters of this work, we do not propose to repeat it here. This review led up to the question, what part in bringing about all the reforms of the last fifty years had the Conservative party played? Had they not offered a strenuous hostility to each boon wrung from power on behalf of justice and freedom? 'I recollect,' said Mr. Bright —and this portion of his speech was received with much laughter—'telling Mr. Disraeli in the House of Commons that when he required any illustrations from history in his speeches he made his history as he went along. He did not get it out of any books, or any authentic records, but from his own inner consciousness. It seems to me very much like what is done by an insect with which we are all familiar, that is very curious, but not very pleasant—I mean the spider. The spider, as

you know, at least apparently—I do not know much about him—the spider spins from some sort of raw material inside, the yarn which he desires to make use of. With this yarn he weaves a very intricate and ingenious web, and with this web he catches flies. The Prime Minister has spun yarns, and he has woven webs, and caught a great many flies; and, so far as I find, the flies seem rather to like it; and in that fact we have at least an explanation of the sort of swollen eminence to which he has attained.' Mr. Bright said he had nothing to remark of the Foreign Secretary (Lord Salisbury), except that there was a painful inexactitude in his recent statements; while as to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir S. Northcote), all were forced to admit that in the ingenuity of his financial explanations there was something much more to wonder at than to admire. The Conservatives reminded him (the speaker) of an anecdote of Dr. Johnson. The Doctor once said to a young man who was not to be commended, 'You must have taken immense pains with yourself; naturally, you could not possibly be as stupid as you are.' Mr. Bright thus concluded his speech:—

'Suppose that the present Prime Minister and his friends had been successful in preventing all the measures which they have strenuously opposed, what would have been the state of the country now, what the rate of wages, what the condition of content and loyalty? You would have had long before this chaos over the country, and anarchy, or that kind of calm which ultimately succeeds when anarchy has passed away. You would have had your aristocracy dead as they are politically dead in France; and more than that, I think it is highly probable that the English Crown, ancient and venerated as it is, if it had been subjected to the strain of fifty years more of Tory Government, would have at this moment been not worth more—if worth as much—as Mr. Turnerelli's wreath. (*Loud laughter and applause.*) And if the people of England allowed this Government, with an unchanged policy, or such a Government, to proceed twenty years longer, I would not give much for the institutions of this country, which the majority of the people value highly, but which we are sometimes told we do not think so much of as those to whom we are opposed. If this picture be true, is it not wise for young men, middle-aged men, all men, to connect themselves with the Liberal party in associations or clubs by which, by moral and just and honest means, the purposes of that party are intended to be promoted? Our duty, in my opinion, is to continue to work for these great objects. They are not all accomplished. There is much else to be done. Much has been done in fifty years. Those who from this platform, or from any other platform, can speak in fifty years to come, I hope that they may be able to show that they also have done their duty in their time—(*cheers*); and that England, whether it boasts or not of being the centre of an empire on which the sun never sets, is an England with a population educated, well-fed, civilized, and enlightened—such a population as we can only have under a just and a moral Government. I believe that at home we have much to do. Now our eyes are directed to foreign countries, to wars afar off, to the sufferings of our countrymen there, and to the more appalling sufferings they are inflicting on the populations with which we are

at war. (*Hear, hear.*) Our eyes and our attention have been diverted from our own immediate and real interests. It is for you, members of this club—for members of the Liberal party throughout the kingdom—to make up their minds that, at the hour which is coming, there will be such a proclamation of opinion on the part of the universal constituencies that shall fix for ever the mark of their condemnation upon the policy of the last four or five years.' (*Loud cheering.*)

Mr. Chamberlain, M.P., in an able speech, subsequently proposed 'Success to the Liberal cause,' a toast which was responded to by the Earl of Camperdown.

Two days later, Mr. Bright attended the annual *soirée* of the Junior Liberal Association of Birmingham, held in the Town Hall. Being called upon for a speech in the course of the evening, he said that he held it wise for young men to devote themselves, to a prudent extent, to the politics of their town and country. There were numbers of young men who brought discredit and suffering, and sometimes ruin, on their families because they had not taken up any question to occupy their spare time. Coming to the question of the assimilation of the county and borough franchise, which he supposed would be one of the first proposals of a Liberal Government, Mr. Bright said that the main objection urged to this measure was the ignorance of those in a certain position in counties; but ignorance was not confined to the counties; and he believed that, if the spread of Liberal opinions or the conduct of great Liberal reforms which had been carried out had been left to men educated at universities, there could be very little to look back upon in our past that would meet either with our admiration or our satisfaction. Unfortunately the board schools could do very little in the way of really educating the rich.

The Zulu and Afghan wars Mr. Bright next proceeded to denounce as savage and cruel. 'I believe,' he said, 'all wars are savage and cruel; but I mean harsh and cruel wars on uncivilized or half-civilized men. When I read of transactions of that kind, something always puts to me this question, What is it that makes, if anything makes, this needless and terrible slaughter different in its nature from those transactions which we call murder?' Excuses had been made for these wars—excuses which were not justified by the facts—excuses that the Zulus had attacked Natal, which was absolutely and notoriously and entirely false. With regard to the Afghans, statements had been made very much of the same character, that they were going to throw in their influence with another and a northern Power, and that they insulted outrageously the Envoy sent to negotiate with them—all of which he believed there

was not a particle of foundation for. At most, in regard to either of these peoples, the case was one of suspicion; but was it right, upon a mere suspicion, that a country like this should send, in the one case 20,000 and in the other 40,000 troops to invade territories, and to put to death not less perhaps than 20,000 men engaged in the defense of their own country, which in our case we considered honourable and needful? Mr. Bright then eulogized Bishop Colenso—whom he described as 'that eminent, and, in his character and conduct, most Christian bishop'—for his conduct in regard to the Zulu war, and expressed his belief that the results of these wars would in the end be disastrous to this country. The right hon. gentleman continued:—

'You recollect, I dare say, many of you, a beautiful ode, written by one of our best poets, who puts in o the mouth of an ancient British Queen, who is supposed to have lived nearly two thousand years ago, a complaint and a denunciation which she utters against the power of Rome, which at that time was invading her country and slaughtering her people. She is made to say, in the indignation with which her heart is filled—

"Rome shall perish—write that word—
In the blood that she has spilt;
Perish, hopeless and abhorred,
Deep in ruin and in guilt."

It was not a prophecy of the British Queen. It was written perhaps a hundred years ago by an English poet, but it might well be that which the British Queen thought and in her words expressed. But what has happened? The great empire has fallen; it is a ruin everywhere. No completer ruin has history shown, perhaps, than the great ruin of the conquering and sanguinary Roman empire. Well, I believe—I believe it whether I read history sacred or profane—that the punishment which has fallen upon ancient empires, upon their rulers and their peoples, will visit modern times, with their rulers and their peoples, if they persist in the pursuit of empire and glory, sacrificing uncounted and countless multitudes of human lives. It seems to me that that which has taken place in past times must in this respect take place in times to come. The retribution—sometimes of individuals and sometimes of nations—comes slowly, but it is sure to come. A great Italian poet has said—

"The sword of Heaven is not in haste to smite,
Nor yet doth linger."

We may be quite sure, therefore, that in some shape, if we, the people of England, tolerate the bloody and sanguinary crimes which are committed in our name, if they are so committed, and we do not remonstrate and condemn, we shall have no acquittal at that tribunal by which the actions, not of individuals only, but of nations and peoples, are finally judged. Now that is my view. (*Cheers.*) Perhaps I have spoken strongly, and with a warmth and an earnestness which some of you might think unnecessary. (*No.*) I believe it is not possible to condemn too strongly the policy by which the hard-earned treasure of your people is wasted, and by which the blood of your brethren, and those whom you are told to call your foes, is spilt. To-day is the anni-

versary of what they call the battle or the massacre of Isandlana, when I know not how many, but I suppose at least 1,500 men—officers, Englishmen, native troops, and I know not how many of the Zulus—were slaughtered. This is the anniversary of that sad day. Can any man show a justification for that transaction, or the compensation that we have received for the enormous and incalculable loss of that one day's war? (*Hear, hear.*) At this moment, in the Afghan country—in a country, I am told, as large as France and as mountainous as Switzerland—you hear of the hanging of scores of men, you hear of villages burnt, of women and children turned out into the snow and the cold of this inclement season, and all done at the command of a Government and a people professing to be wiser, more intelligent, more humane, and more Christian than those upon whom these attacks are made. I say, let us abandon our pretensions; let us no longer claim to be Christian; let us go back to the heathen times, whilst we adhere to the heathen practices—(*hear, hear*); let us no longer—as I see some of the leading men of this country have been doing within the past few weeks, at the opening of churches and at the laying of the foundation-stones of churches—join in all the apparent regard for the Christian religion. Take down, at any rate, your Ten Commandments from inside your churches, and say no longer that you read, or believe in, or regard the Sermon on the Mount. Abandon your Christian pretensions, or else abandon your savage and heathen practices.' (*Loud applause.*)

Mr. Bright concluded by urging his hearers to join with others in the country in the endeavour to establish on firm foundations a Liberal, a wise, an intelligent, and a Christian Government.

On the 30th of January, Lord Derby and Mr. Bright were present at a dinner given by the Mayor of Manchester to the judges of the assize—the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Coleridge, and Lord Justice Brett. Responding to the toast of the House of Commons, Mr. Bright said that in 1832 and 1867 the House underwent with advantage severe treatment, and he was not sure that the patient just now was not subject to a recurrence of its malady. The House was now partly paralyzed. Whatever was done to change its politics was done by the borough representatives; and the time was coming when people would get tired of the paralysis, and would want to give to both portions of it, county and borough, united action.

The announcement of the dissolution of Parliament was made in both Houses on the 8th of March. On the following day, the newspapers contained a manifesto by the Prime Minister, in the shape of a letter addressed to the Duke of Marlborough, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Touching first upon the measures taken for the relief of the impending distress in Ireland, Lord Beaconsfield went on to observe that a portion of its population was attempting to sever the constitutional tie which united it to Great Britain. 'It is to be hoped,' he said, 'that all men of light and leading will resist this destructive doctrine.' But there were some who challenged the expedi-

ency of the Imperial character of this realm. 'Having attempted, and failed, to enfeeble our colonies by their policy of decomposition, they may perhaps now recognize in the disintegration of the United Kingdom a mode which will not only accomplish but precipitate their purpose.' The manifesto went on to say that the occasion was very critical; that the power of England and the peace of Europe would largely depend upon the verdict of the country; that Her Majesty's present Ministers had hitherto been able to secure peace, but that this blessing could not be obtained by the principle of non-interference;—peace rested on the presence, not to say the ascendency, of England in the councils of Europe. Questioned in the House of Lords as to the meaning of this ascendency, the Premier said he meant nothing more than moral ascendency; he did not mean supremacy.

The Liberal leaders at once issued their counter-manifestoes. Lord Hartington replied with force and dignity to the Premier's letter. 'The influence of Europe,' he remarked in his address to the electors of North-East Lancashire, 'does not rest upon boasts of ascendency over Europe irrespective of the objects for which that ascendency is to be employed. It rests on the firmness and moderation of our conduct, based upon the material and moral strength of our position, and exercised in concert with other nations on behalf of peace, justice, and freedom.' Mr. Gladstone, in his address to the electors of Midlothian, also replied to the Prime Minister's 'dark allusions,' pointing out that the true purpose of these terrifying insinuations was to hide from view the acts of the Ministry, and their effect upon the character and condition of the country.

The people were now speedily thrown into the excitement and turmoil of a general election. The energy and activity of the leaders on both sides was very noteworthy; for during the elections Mr. Gladstone made no fewer than fifteen speeches, Lord Hartington twenty-four, Mr. Bright, Sir Stafford Northcote, and Sir W. Harcourt six each, and Colonel Stanley nine. The three members for Birmingham issued a brief joint address, and Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Muntz were early in the field, addressing meetings of the electors. The old representatives were opposed in the Conservative interest by the Hon. A. C. G. Calthorpe and Major Burnaby. The last-named did the speaking, which was frequently of a very injudicious, and occasionally of a very vulgar kind.

Mr. Bright arrived in Birmingham on the 19th, and the scene at New Street, where a large crowd awaited the arrival

of the right hon. gentleman, was very animated when the train steamed into the station, and Mr. Bright was perceived. In Stephenson Place also, and in New Street, large crowds had assembled, who cheered lustily as Mr. Bright drove off with Mr. Chamberlain. In the evening there was a great Liberal meeting in the Town Hall, which in a few minutes from the time of opening was crowded from floor to ceiling. Mr. Jaffray took the chair. When Mr. Bright rose to speak he was received (said the *Birmingham Daily Post*) with one of those outbursts of enthusiasm which are never witnessed in Birmingham except at meetings where Mr. Bright is present. Every person in the hall seemed to cheer lustily, and the gratifying demonstration continued for several minutes. Alluding first to the dissolution, Mr. Bright said he was prepared to admit that it was not unacceptable to him, and he felt quite sure that it had brought an extraordinary sense of relief to the whole country. We were now witnessing the dying hours of the worst of modern Parliaments, and beholding the spectacle of the worst of Administrations being brought up for judgment. Addressing himself mainly to the working classes, he drew a vivid picture of how, during the past fifty years, they had grown to be a great power in the State, and were now able to regard themselves as free men, in the enjoyment of full political power. He pointed out that they owed the inestimable blessings which they were now privileged to enjoy to the foresight, judgment, and indefatigable labours of the Liberal party; and he referred to several measures—notably those which secured the advantages of a free press and compulsory education—as an example of the great work in which Mr. Gladstone and his followers had successfully engaged. The Conservatives, he showed, had systematically opposed all efforts at reform, and had obstructed instead of advancing the attainment of results at which good legislation had aimed during the past half-century. This being the case, he asked whether the electors were prepared to give the Conservative party a new lease of life? This question elicited a storm of opposition cries.

Mr. Bright next dealt with the policy of the existing Administration, which he denounced as one of restriction, monopoly, selfishness and injustice. Since 1874 the country had had no liberal measures. They had had extravagance such as had been unknown for many years, they had had increasing debt and increasing taxes; and if they had not yet paid for all that had been done, the cost of this retrograde policy would have to

be borne by some one at a future day. Instead of doing something that was calculated to promote the interests of the people at home, the Government had been marauding over half the world. England, the mother of free nations, and herself the origin of free Parliaments, had, at the instigation of Lord Beaconsfield, been supporting oppression in Turkey, and carrying fire and sword to the furthest extremities of the earth. He asked them whether they would still trust power to these men in the future, or whether they would not give it to men who would be generous at home, and just and moral, and, so far as it was in their power, peaceful abroad. Mr. Bright said he would not further criticize that wonderful production, the Prime Minister's manifesto, than by saying that it was not likely to add to the number of Conservative representatives from Ireland; and in closing he said he believed there was a voice sounding and a feeling stirring throughout the people of the United Kingdom that would hurl from power the men who had abused it, and that would place in their seats, and in the counsels of the Crown, men whose policy was dictated by a love for the nation,—not a love for gunpowder and glory, but a love for the true and lasting interests of the great people who might entrust them with the authority of government.

A vote of confidence, on the motion of Mr. R. W. Dale, was carried in the three members.

The vote of those who were engaged in the liquor trade throughout the country was of course much discussed at the general election. This interest was a very important element in every borough, and in numerous instances the publicans, alarmed by the proposal in favour of local option, threw in their lot with the Conservatives. A deputation, representing the licensed victuallers of Birmingham, waited upon Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain on the 20th, when a lengthy conversation ensued upon the objects of the deputation. Mr. Bright expressed himself in favour of transferring the licensing authority to town councils, and warned the licensed victuallers against throwing themselves into the hands of one political party, and thus creating a widespread feeling of hostility in another political party, which, after all, was the strongest, and which might come into office again before two months had expired. Speaking of the attitude of the Liberal party on this question, Mr. Bright said: 'I do not suppose that it will deal with any severity in any way with you; whenever it does deal with the liquor question—if it ever does deal with it—you may depend upon it, it is the last party in the country that will ever do anything that

will be in a pecuniary sense unjust to your interests. What it deprives you of in the public interest, it will at any rate compensate you for, and endeavour to do justice, as it does to the whole country and to every interest. You may depend upon it, it will not be unjust to the licensed victuallers and those who are concerned in the sale of those things which, unfortunately, here it appears necessary in some degree to control. I hope as years go on, and you consider this question more, and it is more and more discussed, you will find out that the violent, and I think irrational and passionate action which you now take, is not wise for sensible men, and that it is not of any advantage whatever to the interests you are trying to defend. In the House of Commons, as one of your representatives—if I am again a representative for Birmingham—I shall take care that whatever is done for the public interests shall not be done at the expense of injustice to your trade.' Mr. Bright added that he did not expect to alter their opinions one bit, and being assured by a member of the deputation that their very existence was at stake, he remarked that they were 'more frightened than hurt.' Mr. Chamberlain said that, speaking generally, he quite concurred in what had fallen from his colleague.

Meetings now followed each other in rapid succession. On the 23rd Mr. Bright spoke twice. The meetings took place in the evening, and Mr. Bright was accompanied on his route by bands of music and about 250 torchbearers. The scene was most interesting and picturesque. As the torchlight procession marched through the streets, the band struck up alternately 'Johnnie comes marching home again,' and 'See, the conquering hero comes.' At the first meeting Mr. Bright spoke of the necessity for a reform of the county franchise as the one thing indispensable to a carrying out of various reforms, such as an improvement of the game and land laws; and he advised the working men of the towns, who themselves possessed the franchise, to vote for no candidate who was not willing to confer the same privilege on householders in the counties. At the second meeting the right hon. gentleman said, alluding to his opponents, that he should have thought the Conservatives might have found some persons as well acquainted with political affairs as Conservatives usually are. He then severely criticized the policy of the Government, and with regard to the Treaty of Berlin, by which 'Peace with Honour' had been secured, he observed that it was the people of England who kept out of war with Russia, and not the gentlemen who went to Berlin with a secret arrangement in their pocket which they had previously

made with Russia. He did ask, whatsoever form of Government they might have, for men who would be honest and truthful.

On the 24th Mr. Bright made a speech at Cave's Auction Mart, the chief topic dealt with being the pressing necessity for a reform in the land laws. Mr. Cobden used to say that whoever freed the land would render as great a service to his country as the Anti-Corn-Law League had done by freeing the produce of the land. The necessities of the population would enforce this, and the growing competition from abroad would make it impossible to evade it before long. Referring to certain slanders which had been uttered against him by his opponents, and their falsification of some of his Irish addresses, Mr. Bright showed their groundlessness, and added that John Martin, the strong Nationalist, once came up to him at the door of the House of Commons and said, 'I have watched your public conduct, and I have seen that you have never said one single word that was offensive, or unkind, or unjust to my country; and I wish to shake you by the hand and to tell you so.'

The three Liberal candidates made a last appeal to the electors on the 29th, the nomination being fixed for the following day. In order to ensure the return of their three candidates —each elector having only two votes—the leaders of the Liberal party in the borough divided the support of the Liberal electors in the various wards, directing electors in each ward only to vote for two candidates, and naming the two candidates to whom their votes must be given. This plan was known as the 'Vote-as-you're-told scheme.' The five candidates were duly nominated, and the poll ordered to be taken on the 31st, at 139 polling stations.

The Conservatives professed to be very sanguine of success, asserting up to the very last that victory was within their grasp; but the result showed a great Liberal victory. The arrangement for the equalization of votes in different wards succeeded admirably, all three of the Liberal candidates being brought in triumphantly at but a short distance from each other. After the counting of the votes, the Mayor announced the result to be as follows: For Mr. Muntz, 22,969; Mr. Bright, 22,079; Mr. Chamberlain, 19,544; Major Burnaby, 15,735; and the Hon. A. C. G. Calthorpe, 14,308. The majority of the lowest Liberal over the highest Conservative was consequently 3,809. It may be added here that two other Liberal members for the ensuing Parliament were furnished by Birmingham on the following day, Mr. J. S. Wright being

elected for Nottingham, and Mr. Jesse Collings for Ipswich. After the poll at Birmingham, the three successful candidates issued a brief joint address, thanking the electors. 'We congratulate you,' said this document, 'on the result of your great contest, and on your great victory. Birmingham is still Birmingham, true to its old faith, and to its love of freedom.'

The elections generally throughout the country resulted in the complete discomfiture of the Conservative party. On the first day of the polling, March 31st, the Liberals gained no fewer than twenty-four seats in the boroughs, and only lost nine. Three days later, the gains had sprung up to fifty. The counties, however, were still to be fought, and both sides eagerly awaited the verdict of the rural constituencies. But here, also, great Liberal triumphs were registered. Ultimately, when all the returns from the constituencies had been completed, it was found that the new Parliament would consist of 349 Liberals, 243 Conservatives, and 60 Home Rulers. The Liberals were indeed signally avenged for the disaster of 1874.

Much speculation took place as to who would be the new Liberal Premier. On the resignation of Lord Beaconsfield, Lord Hartington was sent for; but on the following day, the 23rd of April, when his lordship and Earl Granville had an audience of the Queen together, Mr. Gladstone was sent for. The veteran Liberal chief undertook to form a Ministry, and in that Ministry he assumed the double office of Premier and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Bright again accepted office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and the remaining members of the Cabinet were the following: Lord Chancellor, Lord Selborne; Lord President of the Council, Earl Spencer; Lord Privy Seal, Duke of Argyll; Foreign Secretary, Earl Granville; Secretary for India, the Marquis of Hartington; Home Secretary, Sir W. Vernon Harcourt; Colonial Secretary, Earl of Kimberley; War Secretary, Mr. Childers; First Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Northbrook; Chief Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Forster; President of the Local Government Board, Mr. Dodson; and President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Chamberlain. The Duke of Argyll afterwards seceded from the Ministry on the question of the Irish Land Bill.

Upon accepting office, Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain issued their addresses to the electors of Birmingham, seeking re-election. Mr. Bright wrote: 'I have accepted office in the Administration which has just been formed, and the seat

in Parliament which you conferred upon me a month ago is now vacant. I need not tell you how greatly I value your good opinion, and how much I hope that in again becoming a member of the Government I have in no degree forfeited it. In one of my speeches during the week before the last election, I told you that in the month of April we should have a new Parliament, in the month of May a new Government, and that by the month of June it would be seen that the nation had accepted and adopted a new policy. I hope and believe the change we have witnessed will tend to the honour of the Crown and to the welfare of the people. Whether in office or out of it, I shall endeavour to serve you faithfully.'

The two Ministers were re-elected for Birmingham on the 7th of May, without opposition.

CHAPTER XVI.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS—1880-81.

Mr. Bright on the Pacification of Ireland.—Speech at Birmingham.—Scheme for the Reform of the Irish Land Laws.—Mr. Bright on the Rise of Nonconformity.—The Session of 1880.—Mr. Bradlaugh and the Oath.—Mr. Gladstone proposes the appointment of a Select Committee.—Appeal by Mr. Bright.—A Committee appointed.—Its Decision.—Further Debates in the House.—Eloquent Speech by Mr. Bright.—Arrest and Release of Mr. Bradlaugh.—Further History of this Legislative Difficulty.—Mr. Bright on Capital Punishment.—On the Representation of Minorities.—He is elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Address on Irish Affairs.—The House of Lords and the Compensation for Disturbance Bill.—Necessity for a good Land Reform.—Corresponding with Lord Carnarvon.—Mr. Bright on International Arbitration.—Address from French Liberals on the Transvaal War—Free Trade and Reciprocity.—Letters from Mr. Bright.—Local Option in the House of Commons.—Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Resolution carried.—Irish Questions in the Session of 1881.—The Coercion Bill.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—The Land League Agitation.—Mr. Gladstone introduces the Land Bill.—Mr. Bright at the Fishmongers' Banquet.—Observations on the Land Bill.—Debate on the Condition of the Agricultural Labourers in Ireland.—Mr. Bright's Views on the Question.—Second Reading of the Land Bill.—Mr. Bright's Speech.—Ministers at the Mansion House.—The Land Bill passes the Lords and becomes Law.

ONE of the greatest objects to which Mr. Bright has devoted himself during his long political career has been, as we have had abundant occasion for seeing, the pacification of Ireland. Early in 1880, he once more exhibited his earnestness on this question. On the 24th of January the members for Birmingham met their constituents in the Town Hall, and on the motion of Mr. J. S. Wright, seconded by Mr. Alderman Collings, a vote of renewed confidence was passed in them.

Mr. Bright's speech in reply was almost entirely devoted to the Irish question. After remarking what England had been doing abroad, while she had neglected her own people near home, he said that fourteen years ago, when speaking in Dublin, he had quoted a question put in the Parliament of Kilkenny, 'How comes it to pass that the King is never the richer for Ireland?' The question originally put five hundred years ago, and repeated fourteen years ago, still pressed for an answer. This he found in the condition of the land question in Ireland, a condition differing from anything in any other

country in the world. It was true that the laws in Ireland with regard to the land were as nearly as possible the same as in England. But evil laws might work much more mischief in one country and under one state of things than the same laws would in another country with another state of things. Great industries had grown up in England to correct the evil of the feudal system of land; and in these industries the people, divorced from the land by reason of the feudal laws, had found a fresh resource. In Ireland there were something over twenty millions of acres of land, and 292 persons owned nearly one-third. The whole of the proprietors in Ireland were ten or twelve thousand in number, while the tenant farmers were 600,000. There were therefore nearly three millions of people who were mostly tenants at will, liable to have their rents raised and to be ejected at the will of the landlord. Of these landlords a very large proportion were absentees, who spent their rents in London or Paris, or elsewhere out of Ireland.

Mr. Bright asked whether there was any remedy for the state of things which existed in Ireland. Two had been offered from Ireland: one proposed fixity of tenure with terms to be settled by a third party acting between landlord and tenant; while by the other fixity of tenure was secured by means of a permanently settled rent which the landlord was to receive, and there his connection with the land was to end, the tenant remaining for ever, or as long as this rent was paid, in the position of absolute owner. These schemes he dismissed as being inconsistent with sound principles. He himself was against sudden and heroic remedies. But, the right hon. gentleman continued, two things he would do:—

'First of all, I would absolutely stop, by withdrawing all encouragement, the formation of great estates. I would say that when a man owning land died without a will, his land should be subject to exactly the same rule of division which is now applied to personal property. Well, then I would put an end to the system of entail, by which it would be rendered impossible to tie up land, through the man who lies quietly in the churchyard not having had the power of determining for long after he was dead the ownership of the estate which he himself had possessed. I would so legislate that every present generation should be the absolute owners of the land, and the next generation should be the absolute owners; but neither this nor the next should be able to dictate to future generations who should own it. I would have the compulsory registration of all landed property, so that it would be easy, at the expense of only a few shillings or pounds, to transfer a farm or an estate from one to another by an absolutely legal and definite sale. These are things that are done elsewhere, and they ought to be done here just as easily if you would only lay hold of the landed proprietor, and lay hold of the lawyer. They tell me that this is a very difficult thing to do; but it has been done elsewhere, and it must be done here. Nay, more, if you and others like you will speak out, it shall be done here.'

Mr. Bright's second proposal he described as a mode by which the occupying tenantry, in thousands and thousands of cases, might in a very short time be made, not occupying tenants, but occupying landowners—positive owners of their farms. He admitted that the purchase clauses of Mr. Gladstone's Land Act of 1870 had been, with few exceptions, a failure; and gave the reasons for this. After passing an eulogium upon the labours of Mr. Shaw-Lefevre as a member of the Committee appointed by the House of Commons, of which Mr. Bright himself was one, the right hon. gentleman said that that Committee found it was necessary to change the Act of 1870—to establish instead of the Landed Estates Court a separate, independent, and powerful Commission for the purpose of doing this great work amongst the tenantry of Ireland. The proposition was, that if any man wished to buy a farm which his landlord or anybody else was disposed to sell, the Treasury would find a certain portion of the money—it might be two-thirds or three-fourths. The transaction being completed, the farmer goes on paying his rent to the Commission, which is the interest on the money that he has borrowed from them; and after thirty-five years he has paid all the interest and all the principal of the advance made by the Treasury, and the farm becomes his own as long as he chooses to keep it. 'Now, I want the Government—the Parliament—to pass a law which shall compel the London Companies, for example, who are the owners of great estates in the county of Londonderry, to sell their estates under an Act of this kind. I want, also, that the Commission to be appointed should have the power of taking over absolutely any estate offered them for sale which they might think a desirable estate, so that, having it in possession, as the Church Commission had their lands in possession, they might hand it over to various tenants who were willing to buy it. I don't want a Commission to go there and sit down with good salaries to do nothing. They should have a suitable staff; they should have a good lawyer on it, and men thoroughly acquainted with the condition of the land and the people in Ireland; and they should advertise and let all the Irish tenantry know that the Imperial Government has sent them to Dublin, not for the purpose of opening an office and giving salaries—establishing a new system of patronage—but that they should go there and hold out a helping hand to every honest, industrious tenant in Ireland who wishes to possess his farm; and that wherever his landlord was willing to help he would find them willing to give him a transfer.'

Mr. Bright said he believed if his plan were carried out they

would find many of the Irish proprietors, now living in England, would regard it as a great good to their country. Many of these noblemen and gentlemen had no interest whatever but in the prosperous condition of Ireland, and they would be willing to aid in the transfer of estates to the tenantry, and to accept the fair and just compensation which the Government would offer to them. The right hon. gentleman thus concluded his address:—

'At present, what the Irishman wants upon his farm more than all else is to get rid of suspicion; to get rid of the fear of injury, of uncertainty as to his tenure; to have infused into his mind the opposite feelings of confidence and of hope. (*Cheers.*) If you would give to all Irish tenants that confidence and hope, every year would see them advancing in a better cultivation and a more prosperous condition. Does anybody say that hope is nothing and of no avail in the affairs of men? I might quote from the poet who has—what shall I say?—created almost an immortality for our language. He speaks of hope. He says—

"White-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings."

(*Loud Cheers.*) Bring this hope into the Irish farmer's family, and into his household, and it will have an influence as complete, as blessed, and as home-ruling as it will have in the mansions of the rich or the palaces of the great. (*Cheers.*) So far as I have seen Irishmen in their own country and in this, they are as open to good and kind treatment as any other people. They have been the victims of untoward circumstances, which all your histories describe. We—our forefathers—have subjugated them and maltreated them. We suffer in reputation; they suffer in their lives through the misdoings of the past. Let us now not be weary of the attempt to bring about a reformation in that country, which I believe would quell the suspicion, and quell the discontent, and banish the disloyalty which we all lament in Ireland. As to the present distress, I hope that the duty of the Government will not be neglected. I hope they have not spent so much in endeavouring to civilize Zulus and Afghans that they are not able to do something for their poor people nearer home. (*Hear, hear.*) I hope, Sir, the Government, in dealing with the Irish question, will deal with it frankly, and openly, and generously; and that they, as they are now under the pressure of the present distress, will open their hands to relieve the suffering people of the West,—that they will open their hearts, and their intellects too, to the further and the greater question of what shall be done for Ireland in the future.' (*Applause.*)

In the course of a brief second speech, Mr. Bright further remarked on the Irish question: 'We are coming, I presume, by all the indications and by the fact of a constitutional rule, which certain people cannot escape from—we are coming to the time of a general election. If Toryism were a good thing, Ireland would be in a prosperous condition; for there has not been a country in Europe, there has not been a population of this kingdom which has been for so long a period under the principles which Toryism is supposed to love, as Ireland itself. It

has had plenty of military control, it has had plenty of feudalism with regard to its land, it has had a Church which it did not like and which insulted it, and it has had generally a treatment on the part of the Imperial Parliament in past times which might cause it to submit, but never can make it content. I hope the Liberal party will so conduct itself with regard to that country that, whatever there is of a true patriotism and a true honour among its leading men—I mean its men who are now politically leading—that it may be possible for the two to act together on behalf of measures which are necessary, and can no longer be postponed, if we have any real interest in the well-being of that portion of the United Kingdom.'

Mr. Bright's scheme was of course variously viewed by the press, but even those journals which dissented from his proposals admitted that a revolution in Irish agriculture was inevitable.

We turn from Ireland to a less debatable subject. On the 10th of February, 1880, Mr. Bright presided at the first of a series of lectures delivered in Union Chapel, Islington, by Mr. R. W. Dale, on 'The Rise of Evangelical Nonconformity.' After referring to the great compliment which the Rev. Dr. Allon had paid him in asking him to preside, Mr. Bright said that he took a strong interest in the subject of the lecture, because he had sprung from the stock of the martyrs of two centuries ago. He then gave a brief historical retrospect of the past history of Nonconformity, and said that for a long period the Nonconformists of England had been the great advancing and reforming force in our English political life. At the same time they must not forget, and they ought to acknowledge with thankfulness, that there were large numbers of these who were not Nonconformists, who had constantly and honestly co-operated with Nonconformists in all that they had done in favour of greater civil and religious freedom. But for all that they must admit with sorrow that even now the people of this country were set apart in two great divisions. Referring to the bishops, Mr. Bright said he could not for one moment doubt that there were many excellent men among them who grieved in their souls at the evil policy which was adopted at times by the Government; yet so far as he had observed within the last two years, when throughout the whole realm of Nonconformity there had been a united protest against certain transactions, not one bishop had opened his mouth in the House of Lords to condemn one single act that had been committed. This showed to him, not that those men were not good men, but that they

were in an unfortunate position for defending what was good. Mr. Bright then eloquently referred to the work achieved by the Nonconformists:—

'What has Nonconformity done in England? Look at the churches and chapels it has reared over the whole country; look at the schools it has built; look at the ministers it has supported; look at the Christian work which it has conducted. And we must not forget that this great Nonconformist body does not include the great wealth of the country. Nearly all the land in the United Kingdom, within some very moderate percentage, is in the hands of Churchmen and Conformists. They have also, or had till lately, nearly all the endowments of a religious character. They have now the possession of some millions a year of ancient tithes. But without any of these the Nonconformists have done their great work in this kingdom. (*Hear, hear.*) And no Churchman will deny—I don't care how much he may be political—that the Nonconformist population is at least as obedient to the law as any other portion of the people of these kingdoms. If you observe their industry, if you observe their domestic virtues, if you observe their condition as regards morals and religion, I undertake to say, here and everywhere, that they will at least bear comparison in those qualities with Churchmen of every state and rank. If I were a Churchman myself—and I suppose it is very much a matter of accident that I am not—(*laughter*)—if they had not imprisoned an ancestor of mine for many years in Derby Gaol, for anything I know I might have been a Churchman now—I hope I should at least have had that sense of honour and of justice which would have enabled me to look round and behold all the great works of the great Nonconformist body in England, and to regard them with admiration and honour. (*Cheers.*) I would ask you—perhaps I need not ask you, but I would ask any who may read anything that I say on this subject, to look round and consider how much of what there is free and good and great, and constantly growing in what is good in this country, which is owing to Nonconformist action, self-denial, and effort; and, looking upon that, if he cannot himself be a Nonconformist, let him not despise the Nonconformists, but let him say it is a great country and a noble race that can enable a portion of its population to do all this in the unfavourable circumstances in which they have been placed.' (*Loud applause.*)

On the meeting of the new Parliament at the close of April, 1880, an embarrassing question arose with regard to the Parliamentary oath in the case of Mr. Bradlaugh. This gentleman had been elected for Northampton, and on the third day of the swearing-in of members he appeared with a written claim to be allowed to make an affirmation of allegiance instead of taking the oath. There were many who said that the Speaker should have allowed Mr. Bradlaugh to affirm at his own risk, leaving him to be sued in a court of law for the statutory penalties for sitting in the House without the statutory qualification; but the case was so novel, that the Speaker declined to interfere, and left it to the House to determine the claim. The House was speedily plunged into a series of exciting discussions, in which the religious element lent fuel to the flame; and as a natural consequence legislation was much retarded. On the motion of

Lord F. Cavendish, who represented the Government, the chief Ministers not being in the House owing to the new elections consequent on their taking office, a Select Committee was appointed to consider whether Mr. Bradlaugh had a right under the statutes upon which he founded his claim to make an affirmation. This Committee decided against him by a majority of one; but without waiting to see whether the House endorsed the finding of the Committee, Mr. Bradlaugh presented himself at the table of the House on the 21st of May for the purpose now of taking the oath. Sir H. Drummond Wolff objected to this, on the ground that an atheist was not entitled to take an oath. He asked whether the House would allow that formality to be gone through which the hon. member himself avowed would be a mere formality and nothing more? He moved that Mr. Bradlaugh be not allowed to take the oath, and this was seconded by Mr. Alderman Fowler.

Mr. Gladstone proposed the appointment of a Select Committee to consider and report upon this difficult and delicate question. Was the House, he asked, competent to interfere, and prevent him from fulfilling a duty imposed by statute? That was really the question to decide. Of course, if he took the oath, he might be open to prosecution; but could the House prevent him from taking the oath if he were willing to do so? After several other members had spoken, Mr. Bright made an eloquent appeal to the House to discuss the question simply as a question of right and of law, and not with reference to religious views. Was the House, he inquired, by a multitudinous vote to decide that there was no question of law involved, and that it would have no legal opinion, no reference to a Committee of judicious and eminent members, on the point? And after refusing to allow Mr. Bradlaugh to take the oath, what did they propose to do? Would they declare his seat vacant? The electors of Northampton were cognizant of Mr. Bradlaugh's views when they chose him as their representative, and they would probably elect him again. Mr. Bright referred to the case of John Wilkes as an instance of the inconvenience and trouble of a contest between the House of Commons and a particular constituency; and in conclusion he said: 'Would it not be better to follow the wise and statesmanlike advice of the First Minister of the Crown—whose devotion to the Christian faith and desire to support the dignity of the Crown are as great as that of any hon. gentleman opposite,—which will give an opportunity for calm deliberation, instead of at once taking a course which would, if adopted, have the effect

of shutting the door of the House of Commons irrevocably against the member for Northampton?'

The debate was adjourned, but in the end Sir H. D. Wolff's resolution was negatived by 289 to 214. The Committee, with somewhat different powers from those originally suggested by Mr. Gladstone, was appointed after many discussions, and began its sittings. Mr. Bradlaugh conducted his own case. At the close of the sittings, the Committee decided by a large majority that Mr. Bradlaugh could not be allowed to take the oath, but appended a recommendation that he should be allowed to make an affirmation at his own risk, subject to the penalties recoverable for taking his seat without the statutory declaration. On the 21st of June the question entered upon a new stage. Mr. Labouchere proposed that Mr. Bradlaugh be allowed to make an affirmation or declaration, and Sir H. Giffard moved as an amendment that he be not allowed to do so. The battle now waged as furiously as ever. During the discussion, Mr. Gladstone warned the House of the impropriety and danger of entering into a conflict with the constituency which had returned Mr. Bradlaugh. Mr. Bright raised the tone of the debate, and made another eloquent appeal on behalf of toleration. One phrase in his speech greatly excited the wrath of the Opposition. He affirmed his belief and regret that 'to a large extent the working people of the country do not care any more for the dogmas of Christianity than the upper classes care for the practice of that religion.' Mr. Bright laid great stress on the fact that Mr. Bradlaugh had never refused to take the oath, that he had merely expressed a preference for affirming, and that he had always declared the oath to be binding on his honour and conscience. As to the first report, without desiring to disparage its authority, it left the matter in great doubt; and with regard to the second, he thought Mr. Bradlaugh had not been fairly treated in being refused the oath because he had asked for the affirmation. There was no precedent for this inquisition into a man's religious views when he came to the table to be sworn. This interference, he contended, would set up a new test of Theism, and would divide members into two classes. After blaming the Conservative party for resisting, as usual, the claims of justice and generosity, he warned them that all the constituencies of the kingdom would make Mr. Bradlaugh's case their own, and that the course proposed would lead to much evil, and involve the House in humiliation. 'I am here,' said Mr. Bright, 'as the defender of what I believe to be the

principles of our constitution, of the freedom of constituencies to elect, and of the freedom of the elected to sit in Parliament. That freedom which has been so hardly won, I do not believe the House of Commons will endeavour to wrest from our constituencies, knowing by what slow steps we have reached the point we have now attained; and I do not believe that on the recommendation of the hon. member for Portsmouth they will turn back and deny the principles which have been so dear to them.'

Notwithstanding the appeals made by Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright, however, Sir H. Giffard's amendment was carried by 275 to 230—about thirty Liberals voting in favour of it, and a still larger number abstaining from voting altogether. On the following day, Mr. Bradlaugh, who appeared at the bar, and in an able speech claimed his right to take the oath, was taken into custody by the Serjeant-at-Arms for refusing to obey the Speaker's order to withdraw. Considerable excitement ensued, but Mr. Bradlaugh was speedily released by an order of the House, carried on the motion of Sir S. Northcote. On the 1st of July the House passed another resolution, to the effect that every person claiming to be a person permitted by law to make an affirmation instead of taking the oath should be allowed to do so, subject to any liability by statute. This temporarily removed the difficulty between the constituency and the House.

Actions at law were commenced against Mr. Bradlaugh, however, to recover penalties from him for having voted in the House without being entitled to do so. On the main question the case was decided against him, but an appeal was raised on a technical point, which went against the member for Northampton. Meanwhile, in the session of 1881, further difficulties arose in connection with the case, in consequence of the appearance of Mr. Bradlaugh at the House, demanding admittance. Orders were given forbidding him to enter the House, and on his attempting to do so he was forcibly removed. A great number of sympathisers with Mr. Bradlaugh were present in Palace Yard during this scene, and it formed the subject of a debate in the House of Commons. Mr. Bright said he had heard a description of the scene with great pain, and he spoke with feeling of the severity which had been exercised towards Mr. Bradlaugh. He hoped some means would be adopted to meet the case, and to preserve the dignity of the House of Commons, which appeared to him to be in danger. The pressure of public business prevented the Government

from bringing in a bill to meet the necessities of the case, and this extraordinary legislative difficulty remained still unsettled at the close of the session of 1881.

On the 2nd of June, 1880, Mr. Bright presided at the annual public debate of the University College Debating Society. The proposition discussed was 'That Capital Punishment should be abolished.' In summing up at the close of the debate, he spoke strongly against the penalty of death, and expressed his firm conviction that the time would come when the barbarous system of capital punishment would be abolished in this country. The meeting decided in favour of the abolition, which was one of the earliest measures ever advocated by Mr. Bright, and one of the few great social reforms which he has not as yet lived to see carried out.

Mr. Bright's hostility to the principle of the representation of minorities has always been very pronounced, and the most recent evidence of this was furnished in a letter which he wrote last year, to be read at a meeting held to celebrate the formation of a Liberal club at Platt Bridge, near Wigan, on the 20th of July. 'In our division of the county,' said Mr. Bright, 'a great change has been made. There is now, I believe, only one Tory member returned from the constituency of the South-East division, and he is in the humiliating condition of being the minority member. He sits by virtue, not of the goodwill or vote of the majority of the electors of Manchester, but by a contrivance invented to cripple the Parliamentary influence of the great populations and constituencies. His sitting in Parliament is by a direct violation of the ancient principle of the constitution, which in all past times gave to majorities the right to select and to elect members of the House of Commons. Much may be done by labour bestowed on registration, and you have a good field before you. I hope you will be able by the time another general election occurs to place your division in a position as advantageous and as creditable as that now occupied by the South-East division, and by the boroughs within its limits.'

On the 15th of November, 1880, Mr. Bright was elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University, in succession to Mr. Gladstone. The Conservative and Independent students nominated Mr. Ruskin, but the author of 'The Stones of Venice' only received 814 votes as against 1,128 for Mr. Bright. The right hon. gentleman had a majority in all four nations. A torchlight procession by the Liberal students took place at night through the principal streets of Glasgow in honour of Mr.

Bright's victory. It was understood that the new Lord Rector was to be at perfect liberty to deliver his Rectorial address at any time he pleased during his period of office, which expires in November, 1883.

A great Liberal meeting was held at Birmingham on the 16th of November, 1880, and Mr. Bright, who delivered a lengthy speech, again devoted himself to a consideration of the Irish question. Mr. Chamberlain occupied the chair at this meeting, and in his opening speech made a spirited defence of the Eastern policy of the Government. On the subject of Ireland, he remarked that the state of affairs in that country was exaggerated by panic; but at the same time it was certain that acts were taking place there which all men must deprecate, and he was no true friend of Ireland who would not join in entreating the Irish people at this crisis to exhibit their horror and detestation of outrages which would bring discredit upon any cause, and which were likely to ruin, if they were persisted in, the cause which the more patriotic of the Irish people had at heart.

Mr. Bright at once grappled with the great question of the day. Ireland, he observed, was suffering from evils which our forefathers, if they had understood the questions they dealt with, would never have inflicted on the people. If the English Government had always been merciful and just to Ireland, there could not be a doubt that Ireland would be as closely welded to England at that moment as Scotland was; and it would be as difficult to raise the flag of insurrection or discontent in Ireland as it would be for Prince Charlie again to appear with his flag in Scotland. The present movement in a portion of Ireland was a social revolt of a very strange and remarkable character. It was not apparently so much a rising against the Government as against the owners of the soil. There was practically a seizing of the land from which they believed their fathers had been driven out. Such a condition of things demanded the earnest attention and consideration, not only of statesmen and legislators, but of the whole people of the country who were allied with them; 'for we have all a great interest in the welfare of Ireland; and the man who insults Ireland, or injures it, who tramples upon it, who denies it its just rights, is an enemy of England as much as an enemy of Ireland.'

After referring to what had been done in the way of legislation for Ireland since 1869, Mr. Bright complained strongly of the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill in the

previous session by the House of Lords. The right hon. gentleman continued:—

'I recollect some years ago making an observation, I believe on this very platform, about the House of Lords. I said in my opinion an hereditary House of Legislature could not be a permanent institution in a free country. (*Loud cheers.*) Some time after that, when Lord Palmerston was forming a Government, he was urged by Lord John Russell to offer offices in his Cabinet to Mr. Cobden and myself. You recollect that Mr. Cobden was then in America, and the office which Mr. Chamberlain now holds was reserved for him, when he should return to this country. He returned, but did not feel at liberty to accept it. Lord John Russell wrote to me, and explained the reason why Lord Palmerston found that he could not ask me to join his Government; and it was this—that I had expressed opinions, or an opinion, about an institution in this country, which the country thought important and essential, and that there were persons whose support was necessary to his Government, who told him that that support would be withheld if I became a member of his Administration. Well, I should have uttered no menaces—a foolish thing for me to do—against the House of Lords; but if I were particularly anxious that the House of Lords should endure as long as the sun and moon, I should say it would be much better to have some regard for the interests and sufferings of the population of Ireland than to rush up in a crowd and reject a measure which those entrusted with the administration of the country declared, upon their authority and their conscience, to be necessary for the peace of the nation.' (*Loud applause.*)

With regard to the remedy for the existing condition of things in Ireland, Mr. Bright said:—

'Force is not a remedy. (*Cheers.*) There are times when it may be necessary, and when its employment may be absolutely unavoidable; but, for my part, I should rather regard and discuss measures of relief as measures of remedy than measures of force, whose influence is only temporary, and in the long run, I believe, is disastrous. (*Cheers.*) I don't now refer to some of the remedies you have heard of—violent and impossible schemes, where tenants are apparently to fix their own rents, under which, as a body, the landlords are to be got rid of and banished; or where the Government is to undertake some gigantic transaction—raising two or three hundreds of millions of money to buy them out of their estates, and to convey the estates over to the farmers who now cultivate them. Now, I believe that the extravagant, and the impossible, and the unjust is not required even in a case so serious, it may be so desperate, as this. Those propositions, which no Government can listen to, which no people can submit to—those propositions, depend upon it, are made by men who in their hearts hate England much more than they love the farmers of their own country.'

The right hon. gentleman went on to observe that the Irish farmers were in the main industrious and honest, and that there had been no country in Europe in which rents had been more generally and constantly and fairly paid than in Ireland until the recent troubles. He believed that it was possible to frame a measure that would satisfy the great bulk of the Irish tenant-farmers, and before long withdraw them from the influences of men who would lead them into calamities not less than those

which they now complained of and endured. Some mode must be instituted by which a man should not be subjected any day to a notice to quit, or by means of which his rent should not be constantly added to, so that going out of his farm was a less evil than remaining in it. He wanted security from constant torture and menace, and a broad and generous system established by Government by which landowners who were willing to sell—and there must always be many such—and tenants who were willing to buy, should be able to come to terms, and thus gradually, year by year, add to the number of the proprietary farmers in Ireland. Five or ten millions would be well spent in bringing this question to a successful issue.

Mr. Bright said he was stating his own opinions only, and not those of the Government. 'I am saying what I should say if I had never been a member of a Government, and what I should say next week if I this week ceased to be a member of the Government.' Force, the old manner of dealing with Ireland, he could not believe would ever arrest the discontent which existed, or provide a remedy for the widespread disaffection which all of them deplored. The Administration might find great difficulty and danger to themselves in dealing with this question; but he believed that any measure on the basis he had indicated would have the effect of improving the value of all landed property in Ireland. An Irish member of Parliament had told him that a measure giving security of tenure would add ten years' purchase to the value of the landed property of Ireland. 'Therefore,' observed Mr. Bright, 'let no man say that I who speak, and you who listen and applaud—that we are enemies to the proprietary classes. I should think it a misfortune in this country and in Ireland if there were no proprietary class. There is a proprietary class in France, and in the countries of the Continent. But that there should be only a great proprietary class having everything in its hands—the honour and the lives of the people—is a condition of things that ought not to exist, and cannot be permitted to continue.'

Some portions of this speech appear to have given great umbrage to Lord Carnarvon. His lordship accordingly wrote a long letter to Mr. Bright, dated from Madeira, and the communication was published in the London daily journals. Lord Carnarvon complained chiefly of Mr. Bright's 'tender reproofs of the breakers of law and contracts in Ireland,' of his reference to the long list of crimes committed by monarchs, and of

his strictures on the hostile attitude of the House of Lords to popular reforms. He expressed his astonishment that with such views Mr. Bright could remain a Minister of the Crown. To his lordship's letter Mr. Bright replied as follows, on the 25th of December: 'Your letter of December 7th, which appeared in the London papers of yesterday morning, reached me last night. You comment on my speech of November 16th, and find in it terrible blemishes, which have not been discovered by its critics in this country. You condemn me for attacks on the Sovereign, the aristocracy, and the landowners. I have defended the monarchy. The defence is little needed in this country, and in this reign. I have warned the aristocracy of the danger I wished them to shun. As to landowners, I have been one of the most prominent of the supporters of a policy so necessary for the country, and so wise for them, that, had it been obstinately resisted, the great landowners of England and Scotland would long ago have been running for their lives, as some Irish landowners are reported to be doing now. I will not reply at length to your letter: it is enough to acknowledge the receipt of it. I am content to leave my speech and your letter to the judgment of the public.' It was the general opinion of the press upon this correspondence that Lord Carnarvon would have done well to remain in strict seclusion in Madeira.

The principle of arbitration between hostile states and nations is one which Mr. Bright has always advocated, wherever this principle could be acted upon with advantage. But there are crises in the history of peoples where this is impossible. This Mr. Bright remarked in a letter which he addressed at the beginning of the year 1880 to Mr. Alfred H. Love, of Philadelphia. It was read at a meeting of the Peace Society, and Mr. Love explained that it had been received in reply to a communication sent to Mr. Bright by the Connecticut Peace Society, held in Mystic in the previous September, asking him to convey to Mr. Gladstone a series of resolutions adopted at the convention, urging universal arbitration, and specifying certain cases in which it might be employed. After expressing his disinclination to convey to Mr. Gladstone the enclosed resolutions, and suggesting that they should be sent direct by the Society to the Prime Minister, Mr. Bright discussed the question presented in the resolution, and said: 'There are cases in which it cannot be applied. Many such cases present themselves to your mind. It is not applicable to the cases you specify, as your own history—the

history of the United States—affords examples of cases in which nothing can be done by arbitration. Who could have arbitrated between the colonies of North America and the England of George III.; or who could have interfered with advantage between the slave-power and the Government of your country in the year 1861? It is not a justification of war to say that in many cases between nations, arbitration is an impossible remedy. Arbitration is often good; it may be, and I doubt not will be, more and more frequently adopted; but there are cases, and not a few, when it cannot be called in with any advantage. What is wanted is a stronger sense of the evil of war, and of the crime of which it is the cause, and a desire on the part of all Christian men to suppress it. Then men will look on disputed questions without passion, and will strive to settle them without bloodshed; and will refuse to make the tremendous sacrifices which wars involve at the bidding of ambitious and wicked rulers and statesmen.'

While the unhappy Transvaal war was in course of settlement, a memorial was presented to Mr. Bright on the subject by M. Buisson, a French journalist resident in London. The memorial emanated from a number of leading French Liberals, being signed by about thirty members of the French Senate, by certain Deputies, and members of the Paris Municipal Council, the French Academy, etc. Among the signatures were those of M. Victor Hugo, M. Ernest Renan, M. Legouvé, M. Carnot, M. Scheurer-Kestner, and the late President of the Municipal Council of Paris. Mr. Bright wrote to M. Buisson, formally acknowledging the presentation, as follows, his letter being dated March 23, 1881:—'I was glad to have the opportunity of speaking to you yesterday, during your short visit, when you presented to me an address on the subject of the Transvaal war from the eminent French Liberals whose names I find appended to it. They have done me great honour in selecting me as in any manner worthy to be considered a representative of the friends of "international justice, peace, and goodwill between nations." I accept the address with much pleasure, and I can ask now to be permitted to rejoice with them in the happy settlement of a difficulty and of a conflict which has excited in their minds, as in mine, so deep a grief. I believe the English people will gladly sustain a Government which has restored peace by a course at once magnanimous and just, and I feel entire confidence that its policy will be approved in all foreign countries by "friends of international justice, peace, and goodwill between nations." I ask you to convey to the eminent

Frenchmen who have signed the address my warm thanks for the great compliment they have paid me.'*

Early in the year 1881 considerable dissatisfaction sprang up in certain circles on the question of Free Trade, and the cry of 'Reciprocity' was raised. Amongst others who spoke in favour of a partial Protectionist policy was Mr. Hermon, the senior member for Preston, in his annual address to his constituents. An elector having forwarded a copy of the speech to Mr. Bright, the right hon. gentleman replied as follows, in a letter dated the 18th of March: 'I have read Mr. Hermon's speech to which you refer me. I am not amazed at the ignorance it displays or its misrepresentation of facts. He does not tell how he proposes to protect by new tariff duties the factory-workers or the mill-workers of Preston. His constituents are exporters of cotton goods to all quarters of the globe; they compete with all foreign manufacturers in all foreign markets. How can he protect them by reimposing duties on the import of cotton goods which they so largely export? Does he intend to give a bounty out of the general taxes on all goods they export, as he says "he would give a bonus on every acre of land that a

* M. Buisson subsequently published in the *Temps* an interesting account of his interview with Mr. Bright. The following translation of this article was furnished by the correspondent of the *Times* in Paris: 'All Mr. Bright's surroundings, like all he says and does, are unpretentious. American Ministers cannot be more easy of access or have more democratic manners. He occupies one of the plainest houses in Piccadilly. The serious, thoughtful countenance of the most popular of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues is well known. On a near view of Mr. Bright you at once feel yourself in the presence of a conscience ever alive to the idea of duty and responsibility. There is no doubt that he partly owes these habits of reflection and of austerity to his Quaker education, that sect numerically so small, but morally so influential; but there are evidently also in his nature meditative instincts which the Puritanism of the Society of Friends has simply developed. Several of my countrymen, among whom I may name my eminent *confrère* M. John Lemoinne, had been afraid that English susceptibilities would be wounded at seeing Frenchmen interfere in their affairs. I will not anticipate the written reply Mr. Bright has promised me to the address, but I may already tell you that on this point French friends of the Transvaal may be reassured. Mr. Bright's reception at once showed that he regarded the step as calculated not to embarrass, but to strengthen the Government, which has the courage of its opinion and will acknowledge a mistake. On scanning the signatures, which, I must confess, were not all legible, Mr. Bright humorously remarked that Americans are almost alone in the habit of signing their names legibly. On coming to Victor Hugo's name he told me that our great poet had a certain resemblance to the great thinker whose loss England is now deploring—Carlyle; Renan and Henri Martin also attracted his attention. The latest news from the Transvaal, he told me, was encouraging. While mentioning certain precautions which England deems it proper to take with the Boers, Mr. Bright, with his usual frankness, did not hesitate to acknowledge that England had gone beyond her rights.'

farmer of this country chooses to till and crop with corn?" He proposes to give out of the taxes a bonus—how much he does not say, but so much per acre on all land growing corn, doubtless to enable the farmers to pay a higher rent than the land is worth, and to limit our supplies of corn from the United States, Canada, and other countries. Mr. Hermon did not tell his audience that between the harvests of 1879 and 1880—that is, in the year after the bad harvest of 1879—out of every four loaves of the bread eaten by the people of the United Kingdom three loaves came from abroad, and that in no other year in his lifetime or in mine have our people been fed so cheaply or on bread of such excellent quality. What must Mr. Hermon think of the mental condition of his constituents when he ventured to utter to them the confused nonsense of his speech, and what must every intelligent elector of your town think of a representative in Parliament who has not advanced a step beyond the benighted ignorance of forty years ago?' Mr. Bright concluded by recommending both his correspondent and Mr. Hermon to read Mr. Mongredien's little work on 'Free Trade and English Commerce,' out of which they might learn much of correct facts and sound arguments on the question of Free Trade, and on the results of our policy as adopted by Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gladstone since the year 1841.

Communications continued to reach Mr. Bright on this subject, and on the 29th of March he wrote a letter to a Yorkshire gentleman, in which he discussed the question of Free Trade at length. In this communication he said,—

'We all regret that France, the United States of America, and other countries continue to maintain their high tariffs; it is, we believe, a misfortune to them and injurious to us; but we can only legislate for our country, and not for them. If you think that, not being able to sell freely, we should mend ourselves by giving up the power to buy freely, I must leave you to that opinion, only expressing my wonder at it. But you will perhaps say that we can force other nations to reduce their tariffs if we impose a tariff against them. You forget probably that we have tried this in past times, and that it has wholly failed. Sir Robert Peel taught this nearly forty years ago; and he believed, as I believe, that the best defence we can have against the evils of foreign tariffs is to have no tariff of our own. You speak of France. The French Senate is in favour of more protection. The Chamber of Deputies is disposed to Free Trade and a more liberal policy. The Free Trade party in France is more powerful than in past times, and it is not certain that the proposed treaty will be less favourable to trade between the two countries. As to America, how will you compel its Government to reduce their tariff? By placing duties on American exports to England? If so, on what exports?—on cotton for the mills of Lancashire, or on corn for the food of all our people? The American protective tariff makes it difficult or impossible for Americans to become great exporters of manufactures. If you fight them at the Custom-houses, you can only assail them by duties on cotton or on corn, and this surely

will not benefit Lancashire or West Riding. When the debt of the United States is much reduced, when their revenue is in excess of their wants, then their tariff will be reformed and their import duties will be reduced. If you doubt what Free Trade has done for England, go back to your histories and read what was the condition of our working men and their families for the first forty years of this country, when everything was supposed to be protected, and compare it with what it is now. For some years past manufacturers and farmers have suffered greatly, and workmen have suffered much, but they have not seen one-tenth part of the distress which afflicted them during the forty years of high duties from 1800 to 1840. The country suffers now, not from our purified tariff, and not wholly, or in chief part, from foreign tariffs. It suffers from want of sunshine—from the short harvests of several years; and till we have again good harvests we must suffer and endure. Parliament cannot give sun and heat for our fields; it will be no compensation to reimpose import duties, and to deny us the right to purchase freely what we need from foreign nations.'

Being requested by a third correspondent to give his opinion upon 'the question of Reciprocity *versus* Free Trade,' as it affected Bradford, Mr. Bright replied: 'The home trade is bad mainly or entirely because our harvests have been bad for several years. I believe the agricultural classes—owners and occupiers of land in the three kingdoms—have lost more than £150,000,000 through the great deficiency of our harvests. This great loss must inevitably and seriously depress all our other industries. It is not Bradford alone that has suffered; Rochdale in its flannel trade has suffered; the whole cotton trade of Lancashire has suffered greatly; and much of all this is to be attributed to the condition of our great farming interest, and this again to the unfavourable seasons of several recent years. The remedy will come with more sunshine and better yield from the land; without this it cannot come. To imagine that your suffering springs now from hostile tariffs is absurd, because you have had great prosperity with the same tariffs; but to suppose your case will be improved by refusing to buy what you want from foreigners to punish them for not buying freely from you, seems to me an idea and a scheme only worthy of the inmates of a lunatic asylum. To return to Protection under the name of Reciprocity is to confess to the Protectionists abroad that we have been wrong and that they are right, and Protection will henceforth be the justified policy of all nations. If Protection is needful and good, surely at this moment it is needful for our farming class, and yet who dares to propose another sliding scale or a fixed duty on the import of foreign corn? Bradford must be watchful and patient to look out for new markets or new products for her looms, and to endure a temporary reverse, to be followed, I trust, at no remote period with a revival of prosperity. Bradford has had

a good "innings" since 1860; she gained more than other towns from Mr. Cobden's treaty with France. Great success and great expansion of business are followed by depression, to be followed, I hope and believe, by a return to a fair measure of prosperity. But our recovery depends more on the produce of our harvests than on foreign tariffs, or on the changes in the fashion of dress to which you refer.'

The fallacies current upon this question of Free Trade and Reciprocity will certainly appear very extraordinary to those who look into the subject. It cannot be denied, for example, that not only are the various classes of the labouring population of this country far better clothed, housed, and fed than they were in the days of Protection, but that they are in a much better position than the same classes are in many countries where the Protection system is still in vogue. Our workmen can also produce their goods more cheaply than formerly, and when the special circumstances which have caused a reverse in trade shall have passed away, it will be found that the policy of Free Trade will still maintain us in a superior position as compared with other nations. The capacity to absorb increasing exports, moreover, is not the sign either of the failure of trade, or the ascendency of other nations over ourselves, but really points to a greater wealth amongst us as the legitimate outcome of the last thirty-five years of Free Trade. The manner in which the great and growing population of this country has been enabled to pass through recent disasters and shocks to trade, and the way in which our great industries have recovered themselves, furnish striking evidence of the soundness and wisdom of our Free Trade policy. To adopt a system of retaliation in this matter on the ground of the exceptional reverses from which we are suffering—reverses which may largely, almost entirely, be accounted for by natural laws—would be to put back the dial of our social and commercial progress.

On the 14th of June, 1881, Sir W. Lawson once more brought forward the subject of the liquor traffic in the House of Commons, when he moved, 'That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable to give legislative effect to the resolution passed on the 18th of June, 1880, which affirms the justice of local communities being entrusted with the power to protect themselves from the operation of the liquor traffic.' Mr. Bright, in speaking upon the resolution, pointed out that it did not commit the House to the Permissive Bill, which he has always opposed as the greatest obstacle to temperance legislation, but only to

the proposition that the present licensing system was bad, and might be improved. This was evidently the opinion of the country at the last election, and the House had passed a similar resolution last year. But he denied that that resolution bound the Government to any particular course, nor would it be committed to take charge of any measure which might flow from this resolution. He insisted on this because the present session was fully occupied, and when the Land Bill was passed there would probably be no time for other measures. But even though the Government did introduce a bill, it might not be altogether acceptable to Sir Wilfrid Lawson on such points as compensation and restriction, instead of abolition. Moreover, there were other important questions to be dealt with, such as the land laws, county franchise, etc., for which public opinion might be more ripe than on this question. 'My hon. friend,' said Mr. Bright, in conclusion, 'may take comfort in this —that although the Government are not prepared now to introduce or promote any bill upon the question, the agitation among the people, the discussion of the question going on hereafter, as it has gone on during the last few years, will create a movement of opinion which not only will compel some Government to deal with the question, but enable any Government to deal with it in a manner which will be effective and satisfactory.' The motion was carried by a majority of 42, the numbers being—for the resolution, 196; against, 154.

The session of 1881 was almost entirely devoted to Ireland. Unfortunately, before Mr. Gladstone could introduce his promised Land Bill, the Government were obliged to bring forward a Coercion Bill. The information which the Irish Executive possessed of the disturbed and lawless condition of certain districts in Ireland rendered this step absolutely necessary. That it was one repugnant to every member of the Liberal Government need scarcely be said; but by the close of December it had become obvious that coercion was inevitable. In January, accordingly, soon after the meeting of Parliament, Mr. Forster introduced the bill, which was fiercely debated. Some of the Irish members charged Mr. Bright with inconsistency, citing in proof of this extracts made from his speeches on the Irish question.

On the 28th of January, in his speech upon the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, the right hon. gentleman defended himself, and gave his reasons why he was compelled to be the unwilling advocate of restrictive measures. He remarked with regard to former repressive measures that he had never denied

their necessity, but he had complained that they were not accompanied by remedial measures, and that no case of grievance was admitted. So, he added, if this bill had stood alone, and if it were not notorious that it was to be accompanied by a large remedial measure for the admitted grievances of Ireland, he would not be sitting on the Treasury bench at that moment. Without going into the figures, and leaving the case confidently as it had been stated by Mr. Forster, he held that the deplorable condition of Ireland was fully established by private letters from all classes and conditions of men, by the accounts of the Irish refugees, and by the boast of the Land Leaguers that they had superseded the law of Parliament. He had always condemned the condition of the land tenure of Ireland, but, without pronouncing any judgment on the legality of the Land League, he asserted that the results of it were illegal and in the highest degree mischievous.

Replying to the argument that the Land League agitation was to be defended on the same grounds as the Anti-Corn-Law League agitation, with which it was alleged to be parallel, Mr. Bright said :—

'If your League were conducted as our League was, I should not have opposed you. I should have sent you a subscription and become one of your members. Does any one suppose that my right hon. friend the member for Wolverhampton, then the Parliamentary leader of that agitation, ever used such language as we have heard from that bench during the present session? Can any one find in any of my speeches, or of those of the member for Wolverhampton, any passage which leads to the condition of things which not only exists in Ireland, but is boasted of by the voice and with the approbation of gentlemen opposite. (*Cheers.*) Strong language was used. I am not a bit ashamed of strong language, It is sometimes even necessary. (*A laugh.*) I recollect a passage in a speech of one of my friends who once sat on this side of the House—I mean Mr. Fox, who was a member for Oldham—in which he said, "The Corn Law is the harvest of death as well as of the landowners, and monopoly says to corruption, 'Thou art my brother.'" And that was a strong expression, though it was true. But that language did not stimulate any man to violence. We had branches all over the country, just as the Land League has; and active men in every district—in the boroughs, and in many of the villages in the country. But it was never said that any single person in any of those branches adopted the practice which has become common in your branches. (*Cheers.*) We have heard lately of the Land League courts. (*Hear, hear.*) At the time of our agitation there were many incendiary fires in the east of England, particularly, I believe, in Suffolk. But all we did was to ask Parliament to grant a Commission to inquire into the cause of them; and not a single word of ours in the House or out of it, or any single line written in our accredited organs, ever stimulated to crime—either those I just mentioned, or any others. (*Cheers and counter-cheers—"Oh! oh!"*) If that be so, one is driven to the conclusion that your population are less indisposed to crimes or offences of this kind than our population. It has always been my wish, in anything that I have said in the last thirty years, never to cast a slight or a stigma or a slur upon your people. I

could spend a few minutes in dwelling upon the virtues of the Irish people, and I believe their offences and their crimes and their vices arise rather from the condition into which those who should be their superiors have brought them—(*loud cheers*)—than from their own hearts. No, sir, in our agitation there was no language, no teaching in favour of any crimes, any outrage, any terror. I call to witness every man who remembers the time that our speeches, strong as they might be, condemnatory as they might be of the law which we condemned, hostile as they were to the landowners, were still always conceived in a moral and an elevated tone, and directed the people to their own political friends, and to the element of justice in Parliament, to seek the remedy for their grievances. (*Cheers.*) But what have these gentlemen done? They have to a large extent demoralized the people whom they profess to befriend.' (*Loud and continued cheering.*)

Mr. Bright then referred to the progress which had been made in Ireland during the past fifty years, illustrating it by a rise in wages, a better dressed and better fed population, and other arguments; and observing that it was a grievous trouble to members of the present Administration to be compelled to submit a measure like this, he added, in conclusion: 'It is only under a solemn sense of duty, from which it is impossible to shrink, that we ask the House to support us in a measure of restriction—restriction, as we believe, to the few, and I have no doubt, as it will be exercised, a measure of mercy to the many. This bill will only be temporary. Many persons, not so scrupulous as we are on these matters, will say that it ought to be continued for a longer period than the 1st of September next year. We hope the disturbing elements will only be temporary, and that the measure therefore will only be temporary. I trust that the Land Bill when it comes before the House—and the sooner this bill is disposed of the sooner the Land Bill will be on this table—will be a great and a comprehensive measure, and that it will be a durable monument to the memory of this Parliament and of the Administration of which my right hon. friend is the head.'

The Suspension Bill, after protracted discussions, passed through both Houses and became law, and it had a salutary operation in checking much of the lawlessness which prevailed in the perturbed districts of Ireland.

On the 7th of April, in a House crowded in every part, Mr. Gladstone introduced the Irish Land Bill. He explained that the salient point and cardinal principle of the measure was the institution of a court which was to take cognisance of rent, and which, in taking cognisance of rent, would also, according to the provisions of the bill, not be debarred from taking cognisance of assignment. In discussing the relations of landlord and tenant in Ireland, he detailed the instances in which

advances would be required from the public Exchequer; and in further elucidating the principles upon which the measure was founded, he pointed out that it was proposed to set up a system of limited and regulated freedom of contract between the landlord and the tenant, wherein, in consideration of the circumstances of Ireland, the tenant should, notwithstanding, be fortified by certain provisions of the law as to his right of sale, and as to guarantees against arbitrary increase of rent. This would be restrained by certain rules. Compensation for disturbance would be regulated according to different rates, and the right to sell the tenant's interest would be universally established. In a beautiful peroration, with which he closed a speech which had occupied two hours and a half in delivery, Mr. Gladstone observed: 'Justice, Sir, is to be our guide. It has been said that love is stronger than death, and so justice is stronger than popular excitement, than the passion of the moment, than even the grudges and resentments and sad traditions of the past. Walking in that path, we cannot err. Guided by that light—that Divine light—we are safe. Every step we make upon our road is a step that brings us nearer to the goal; and every obstacle, even although it seems for the moment insurmountable, can only for a little while retard, and never can defeat, the final triumph.'

The first occasion upon which Mr. Bright expressed his views on the Land Bill was on the 28th of April, at a banquet given to Her Majesty's Ministers by the Court of Assistants of the Fishmongers' Company. The right hon. gentleman was called upon to respond for the House of Commons. Having recalled his experiences of Parliament when he first took his seat in 1843, he dealt with the Irish question, and on the necessity for a Coercion Act he remarked: 'If it were conceivable that every landowner in Ireland had a charmed life, and there was no danger to the landowner or the agent, still now, in the state in which Ireland has been of late, it would be necessary to take some measures which would tend to protect the lives of a class which is not landowning or connected with land agency, but which is of the common run of the population of the agricultural portion of the country. I thought it necessary to say that. There is no class in the country which is more in need of tranquillity and order than those who have to remain at home engaged in ordinary industrial occupations.' But coercion was only temporary; the real remedy after all—and the one which would be permanent—was land reform. Coming to the Government bill, Mr. Bright said:—

With regard to the Irish measure to which Lord Hartington referred I had an interesting letter from Dr. Cahill some weeks ago, in which the writer concluded by saying: 'If you will secure the tenant, you will secure the landlord.' (*Hear, hear.*) And the object of the bill really is for the purpose of giving security and certainty and more to the tenant as to the landlord, and to give him the greatest possible stimulus for the exertion of his industry. And if that be the object of the measure, there can be no manner of doubt that it must be of the greatest advantage to the landlord. (*Hear, hear.*) I believe the effect of the bill when it comes into operation will be to steady the price of land in Ireland. The price may not actually advance. Land cannot be sold generally over the country. But suppose the landlord produce of anything at what are called rights—great power over his tenants—has lost it in some degree undeniable, will be secured. He will be able to live among a population who no longer distrust him and have the agent and steward whom he may direct to conduct and security such as in many parts of Ireland for a long time he has not been able to enjoy. The bill of the Government, as you know as well as all the circumstances the best bill that could be offered to Parliament. It is impossible for any Government to work more steadily than that of Mr. Gladstone. There never was the head of a Government more capable, more anxious to do good than Mr. Gladstone. (*Cheers.*) What, then, can those members of the House of Commons who are supporters of Mr. Gladstone's Government have patience in some cases, they should have trust in other cases that the Government will do all that they possibly can in the circumstances in which they are placed; and if they give that confidence to the Government, I have no doubt that the Government will as far as possible justify the confidence reposed in them. It is not for me as a member of the Government to pass an opinion upon it for what it has done or intends to do. But this I can say fairly and honestly, knowing intimately all its members. I believe there is no Government—and I do not think we shall have any—that can more rightly claim the confidence and the honest and generous support of the Liberal party in the House of Commons and the Liberal party throughout the country. (*Cheers.*)

Before the debate on the second reading of the Irish Land Bill was brought to a conclusion in the House of Commons, a debate arose upon another important Irish question. On the 6th of May, Mr. Callan moved the following resolution: 'That in the opinion of this House it is expedient and necessary that measures should be taken in the present session of Parliament to improve the condition of agricultural labourers' habitations in Ireland.' The hon. member said that the Land Bill of 1870 had, when introduced, a clause affecting the condition of the Irish labourer, but that provision was unwisely and uncharitably expunged by the House of Lords. The Government then pledged themselves that in the following year a measure would be introduced dealing in a large spirit with the condition of the labourers in Ireland, but no bill was introduced either in that or the following years of the last Liberal Government. For the sake of the credit and honour of England, he appealed to the Government to deal with this question.

Mr. Bright spoke during the debate, and said that there was no kind of conjuring by which the condition of the labourer

could be improved, except by stimulating the industry of the country. He was ready to agree to anything which the Irish members could propose that had even the probability of being useful to the labourers. But the Irish labourer had now more than double, perhaps three times the wages he had a little over thirty years ago. Speaking of the neglect of manufactures in Ireland, Mr. Bright said: 'I do not see why, if there was that spirit amongst the Irish classes—I am not speaking of the poor labourer, but of the middle classes—why in the name of common sense is it that during the last hundred years there has not been a single manufactory of any importance established and sustained in Ireland? (*Cheers.*) Why is it that water runs from Loch Corrib into Galway Harbour, and there is nothing done with it? If it were in America, it would be used. If it were in Great Britain, it would be used. Why is it not used in Ireland? It is not a sufficient answer to say that the land laws are bad. (*Hear, hear.*) Our land laws are bad. But what we have done has been in the teeth of a system of land laws which is in some respects even worse than that of Ireland. I think Irish members and Irish gentlemen everywhere ought to ask themselves whether it is not possible, amongst the middle classes in that country, to do something to utilise the vast stores of water they have, and the many advantages they have. There is no single disadvantage, except that they have not a supply of coals as good as we have. (An Irish member—"Nor capital.") As to capital, do you suppose that the people of Great Britain would send their capital to every quarter of the globe, and lose scores if not hundreds of millions of it within the last few years—do you suppose they would not invest their capital if there was a disposition on the part of the Irish people to make use of this capital—(*Cheers.*)—and to convince the people of England that their capital was secure?'

The Irish, continued Mr. Bright, were rather cleverer than the English or Scotch, yet although they beat us in many things, they did not beat us in industry. The condition of the Irish labourers and their dwellings was a disgrace to the country. 'I do not know whether they are a disgrace to the Government or not, but we may divide the blame, perhaps, between the Government and the Irish people. If hon. members can suggest any plan which is practicable, which does not rob somebody else, that is an honest, practicable plan by which the condition of the labourers can be improved, they will find no members of this House more anxious than the Government

to adopt it, and no member more anxious to further it than they will find myself.'

Mr. Callan's resolution was agreed to, after the excision of the words 'in the present session of Parliament.'

The debate on the second reading of the Land Bill in the Commons was most protracted, extending over several weeks. On the 9th of May, Mr. Bright addressed the House in support of the bill. He first passed some strictures upon the speech of Sir John Holker, who had declared he would vote against the measure because he was a Conservative, and was opposed to unnecessary infringement of the laws of property. The right hon. gentleman then went on to state his opinion that at the present moment Great Britain was longing to be just and even generous to Ireland. He thought it would be wise on the part of the landowners not to reject a measure which might possibly hereafter be followed by one that they would not like any better. What was wanted in Ireland was a measure securing adequate rent to the landlord, and adequate security to the tenant. These, he strongly believed, would be secured by the present bill. 'What we want to do by this bill,' said Mr. Bright, 'is to drive famine, and poverty, and suffering, and discontent from Ireland. I believe it can only be done by measures such as this. We have in the past history of Ireland just this—on the one side repeated confiscation, penal laws, Acts in restraint of the constitution, Coercion Acts in their many hurtful forms: we have had a recent and unhappy acquaintance with them. On the other side, we have suffering, and discontent, and crime, and I am sorry to say, in some cases, crime such as the records of savages (if savages had records) could hardly excel for darkness and cruelty. These are things which ought to shock the members of the Legislature, and draw them with an irresistible impulse to find some mode of changing the condition of the people, which has not been creditable to the Government of the country.'

Mr. Bright said the House could not rest with matters as they were. They must either go forward, as they proposed to go, or go back. Going back meant that they must govern Ireland with a constabulary and with a great army. They would be very soon driven to suspend trial by jury, to abolish freedom of the press, and the freedom of public meeting. 'It is said,' continued the right hon. gentleman, 'that the bill makes concessions to tenants. Nobody denies that, least of all those who have taken pains to frame the bill. It does make concessions to tenants, and at the same time—and that is the supposed cause

of its intricacy—the bill contains some safeguards, placed so that, as far as it is desirable or possible with justice to the tenant, the interests of the landlord should be preserved. Now, the idea of the English system is a complete delusion—I speak of Ireland; I am not speaking of the English system in England. It will remain in England until Parliament by public opinion thinks it necessary to make changes. (*Cheers.*) I have no idea, and no belief, and no suspicion that it will be ever needful in Great Britain to make changes such as those this bill is intended to make in Ireland. But in Ireland you have the question of race, you have the question of religion, you have the question of absenteeism; you have the circumstances of great estates managed continually by agency, and, in fact, everything in Ireland is at war with the English system. Therefore you are condemned to have recourse to laws which are very different from what we have in England, and which I trust and hope never will be necessary in this country.' In a very forcible passage, Mr. Bright added: 'To the complaint that the bill gives so much to the tenants and takes it all from the landlords, I should make this answer: If at this moment all that has been done by the tenant in Ireland were gone, imagine that—if all that the tenants have done were gone, and all that the owners have done left—(*Liberal cheers*)—that is the picture, the sort of map I should very much like to see; it would be charming; it would finish this debate in five minutes—(*Liberal cheers and laughter*)—if this map were drawn; then, over nine-tenths of Ireland the land would be as bare of houses, of barns, of fences, and of cultivation, as it was in prehistoric times. It would be as bare as an American prairie where the Indian now roams, and where the foot of the white man has never yet trodden.' (*Hear, hear.*)

Being interrupted by Col. Tottenham, and asked for figures, Mr. Bright said he was stating no more than what was stated thirty-five years before by the greatest of all the Commissions—the Commission presided over by Lord Devon. In the matter of rents, landlords had in hundreds, probably thousands of cases received over and over again the value of that which tenants had placed upon their farms. For himself, he had a special affection for that part of the bill which tended to convert to a very large extent the tenant-farmers into farmers who were owners of their land. If land was to be made secure in Ireland, it must be by a system which, dividing and dispersing the land, would furnish it and its rights with a multitude of defenders. That was exactly what one of the principal por-

tions of the bill was intended to secure to landed property in Ireland. Mr. Bright's peroration, which in the outset dealt with the Emigration question, was as follows :—

'The hon. member for Cork (Mr. Parnell) found some fault in his speeches outside the House with regard to the bill. He objected to what was said about emigration, and that nothing was said about the labourers. The bill indicates nothing of the kind that any single Irish man or woman will be compelled or lured to leave the country and cross the Atlantic. No less than ninety-five thousand persons emigrated from Ireland last year—(*cheers*) ; and if the reports we see in the papers are correct, it seems that now emigration is going on at a greater rate than it was at this time last year. I put it to the hon. member for Cork if the great mercantile steamers were to anchor at Cork or Galway, and to offer free passages to the families of all the population of Connaught, how many would remain behind? Probably he would say the whole of the population of Connaught; but I have not the least doubt the half of them would find their way in a very short time to the United States. That is a country which opens its door to everybody. The Minister of the United States in this country (Mr. Lowell), a man who has put as much wisdom as wit into his poems, in describing that country, says—

"Whose very latch-string never was drawn in
Against the poorest child of Adam's kin."

(*Cheers.*) Therefore, whilst the bill does not propose to offer any inducement, except such as the population now have, to any single Irish family to emigrate, yet I am bound to say I believe it would be far better for a great number of those families to be settled in the better parts of Canada and the United States than to remain where they are, or to be removed from where they are to any of those tracts of land which at a certain expense, not easily ascertained—(*hear, hear,*)—might in Ireland be made fit for habitation. So that I trust that these families that will go, and that are going—notwithstanding the violent passions that are excited in America by statements that are—some of them—not true, and some of them wildly exaggerated,—I trust there are persons going to the United States who before long will find, and will hear from the old country that her miseries are abating, and that justice is being done, and that the disloyalty and the suffering that we have had so much to regret are in a great part removed. (*Hear, hear.*) And with regard to the labourers, to whom the hon. member for Cork has referred, I believe nothing will do so much good for them as anything that will induce farmers to cultivate their land better. (*Hear, hear.*) What shall I say about this bill? If the portion of it which deals with the relations of landlord and tenant is worked with fairness, if the other portion—the purchase clauses and powers—is worked with energy, I dare to hope and believe we shall find it a measure of healing and blessing to the Irish people—(*loud cheers*); and I ask hon. members on every side of the House not to imagine that the bill was not framed with a great intention, and honestly, and with a great purpose, (*Hear, hear.*) Let them support, as far as they can, the bill, and the Government which has introduced it to the House. This night, and every night, the House prays in language that always strikes me as very touching and very beautiful. As the representatives of the nation we pray to Heaven for the peace and tranquillity of the realm. It is for the peace and tranquillity of the realm that this bill has been drawn up and proposed to the House; and it is with the hope that if it passes it will tend to that end, that we, with great confidence and not with fear, ask for it the acceptance and the sanction of Parliament.' (*Loud cheers.*)

The second reading of the Irish Land Bill was eventually carried on the 19th of May, an amendment by Lord Elcho being defeated by the large majority of 352 votes to 176. In Committee, the discussions were renewed, and at one time it seemed almost impossible that the bill could be sent up to the House of Lords in time to be carried during the current session. After many delays, however, the measure passed the Commons amid enthusiastic cheering, and was despatched to the Upper House.

On the 8th of August, Mr. Bright was amongst the guests present at the Ministerial banquet at the Mansion House. Mr. Gladstone responded with happy eloquence and effect to the toast of the evening, 'Her Majesty's Ministers;' and after the Marquis of Hartington had responded for the House of Commons, there were loud and repeated calls for Mr. Bright. At first the hon. gentleman declined to answer the call; but upon it being persistently renewed, he rose, and complied with the wishes of the assembled guests. 'I had expected,' he said, 'not to be one of the speakers, and the pleasure of being permitted to enjoy that tranquil obscurity in which persons have the advantage of listening, and the privilege of remaining silent, was one to which I thought on this occasion I might aspire. But I observe that the members of the Government who have already spoken—the Prime Minister, Lord Hartington, and Lord Kimberley—have come hot from the House of Parliament which they represent. They remind me of an anecdote which my dear friend, the late Mr. Cobden, once narrated to me. He told me that at the end of a session a member of the House, who had a yacht, and who spent the autumn in the Mediterranean, invited him to go with him, saying that he would invite three or four other members of the House, and that they would all have a nice time of it. Mr. Cobden replied that he had seen so much of hon. members during the session that he did not wish to see another for six months to come.'

After remarking that the House of Commons wanted repairs of an extensive character, Mr. Bright went on to discuss the great measure of the session—the Land Bill. Respecting this he said:—

'I believe that this measure is as great and as noble a measure on that question as it would be possible for the English Parliament to pass; that it is one which it is impossible, when it becomes law, that the Irish people should not discover to be a great measure of satisfaction and redemption for them, unless they are unable to understand a policy intended directly for their benefit. (*Cheers*) I have said that there are fears. I have fears. After the state of things through which the Irish people have gone in so many successive pe-

riods, it is not perhaps quite certain that all remedial measures are not too late. I will not express a strong fear that such is the case; on the contrary, I will express a strong hope that such is not the case. It may be that some would say,

> "For never can true reconcilement grow
> Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep;"

but as generation after generation passes, governed by a monarchy kindly, liberal, beneficent like ours, legislated for by a Parliament anxious to do justice to all the people under its sway, I will not doubt, I will believe, that whatever may be the passion, whatever the frenzy in the minds of the Irish people, whatever the gloom that now rests upon that country, all this may pass away, and that the time may come, and come soon, when in Ireland it shall be felt as much as it is felt in England, that, with all its faults, our Government does intend to do rightly by the Irish people. (*Cheers.*) Therefore, looking on the session now drawing to a close, terrible as has been the work, long as have been the hours and the nights of its toil, often as we have been shocked by conduct in the House that has been distasteful and distracting to us, nevertheless I live in the hope that men will look back to the session of 1881, and will say that if we had the greatest of statesmen to guide our affairs, in that year was passed the greatest of measures in order to bring about tranquillity, peace, and union in the greatest empire on which the sun shines.' (*Loud cheers.*)

The Land Bill having passed the Commons, its probable reception in the Lords caused much comment and excitement in the press and throughout the country. Their lordships, however, taking the statesmanlike view of the matter, did not reject the bill, but passed the second reading, and proceeded to discuss its provisions in Committee. At the instance of Lord Salisbury, the Conservative leader in the Upper House, and other peers, many amendments were made, and at one moment it appeared that the bill was in danger. The country began to manifest signs of agitation upon the subject, but the House of Commons having disagreed with the Lords' amendments, which were considered vital to the existence of the bill, the Lords gave way, and the Land Bill became law on the 23rd of August.

Of this remarkable measure it may be said that its object is to give adequate security of possession to the Irish tenantry, at rents which are not excessive or unreasonable; and to give them also, by the free right of assignment or sale of their holdings, the value of improvements made by them, which have hitherto in too many cases been absorbed by the owners of the soil. It is hoped by the Government which framed, and the Parliament which has passed the Act, that the position of tenants will be made more secure, and that landlords will find in the increased security of their incomes a full compensation for any diminution of the powers or rights they have heretofore possessed.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. BRIGHT'S ORATORY.—GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Personal Characteristics of Mr. Bright.—His Oratory.—Its Power and Quality.—Its Freshness, etc.—Comparison with Mr. Gladstone.—Mr. Bright's Knowledge of Literature.—His Humour.—Examples.—Recreations.—Moral Characteristics.—His Courage and Earnestness.—Mr. Bright as an Agitator.—The true Seer in English Politics.—His Career and its Objects.—The Friend of true Liberty.—Influence upon his Time.—Conclusion.

WE have now reached the close of our survey of Mr. Bright's career. Something still remains to be said, however, concerning the personal characteristics of this leader of the people; and our observations shall not pass beyond those fair and legitimate bounds which should be observed when men speak of those whose long services to their country have not touched their final limit. The substantial lifework of Mr. Bright has been achieved; on the 16th of November next he completes his seventieth year—according to the great Hebrew king the allotted span of human life; but, notwithstanding this, we will still hope that for many years to come he may be a living force amongst us, and a grace and an ornament to the British Senate.

When the name of Mr. Bright is mentioned, one of our first reflections is occupied with his oratory. And in this respect, as regards its power and influence, there is but one other public man comparable with him, namely, Mr. Gladstone. All other Parliamentary speakers are at an immeasurable distance from these. It is not that in every respect Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone are superior to Lord Beaconsfield and some other of their contemporaries; they have doubtless been excelled in certain individual gifts and qualities, but in all those characteristics which combine to make the great orator, their superiority has been manifest. Mr. Bright, too, has been favoured by nature for the work he has had to do. Though not of imposing stature, his form and bearing are such as to create at once an impression in his favour. Robust in figure, and with a fine, genial, Saxon face, his very glance has been sufficient to fix his audience. Like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, 'he holds us with his glittering eye;' and that eye, which is of a deep blue, can now flash with indignation, and now beam with

the soft light of sympathy. His broad face, high, full forehead, and mobile mouth are all in keeping with the oratory which is so characteristic of him. His voice is—or was in its meridian strength—remarkably clear and of great compass, reaching a mass of fifteen thousand persons almost as easily as it could address itself to a hundred and fifty. The speech itself is always singularly clear and vivid, now rippling with humour, now impregnated with earnestness and pathos. As one critic has observed, 'his diction is drawn exclusively from the pure wells of English undefiled. Milton and the Bible are his unceasing study. There was a time when it was rare to find him without *Paradise Lost* in his hand or in his pocket. The use of Scriptural imagery is a marked feature of his orations, and no imagery can be more appropriately employed to illustrate his views; for Mr. Bright, in all his grand efforts, rises far above the loaded, unwholesome atmosphere of party politics into the purer air and brighter skies of patriotism and philanthropy. We may differ about his means or measures, but no one can differ about the aim, when he puts forth his strength to raise Ireland, or India, in the scale of civilization, to mitigate the evils of war, or to promote the spread of toleration and Christian charity throughout the world.' Mr. Bright can speak extempore, and with much incisiveness on such occasions—as witness one of his speeches during the Crimean war; but his finest efforts are prepared. In common with all the great ancient and modern orators, he devotes time and care to the preparation of his speeches on all those occasions when the subject is worthy of his powers; but the great charm of his oratory is that, although his matter is prepared, it is given with a freshness and warmth of colouring which make it appear spontaneous.

He has much fancy and vivacity; and his universal sympathies invest his speeches with a wide and permanent claim upon the world's attention. As compared with Mr. Gladstone, who has all the treasures of classical lore at his command, he lacks comprehensiveness and variety in treatment. But those who are in the habit of assuming that Mr. Bright's knowledge of the literature of his own country is confined almost exclusively to Shakespeare and Milton—with of course a profound knowledge of the Bible—commit a grievous error. There is scarcely an English poet, or a writer of prose, with whose works he is not largely familiar; and he can draw at will and with facility from this great storehouse of intellectual wealth. For a generation back, the House of Commons always

filled immediately when the news reached the lobbies that Mr. Bright was 'up.' He had always something to say, and in this respect he may be imitated with advantage by younger and more garrulous speakers. The great art of legislative oratory is to have something to say, and to know when to say it. Let these conditions be observed, and the House will speedily recognize its duty, and will listen. The simplicity of Mr. Bright's language is another point worthy of note: he has shown the mighty but neglected power of words of one syllable; and thus, while enlisting the attention of the most intellectual and the refined, he at the same time secures a still larger audience amongst the masses. It has been well remarked that his natural gifts have been both modified and expanded by study, and that in his eloquence he goes to the primary roots of things: he gets hold of eternal principles. Facts occupy a subordinate position in his oratory; but they are always at command, and whenever they are used, they have the awkward merit for his opponents of being perfectly irrefragable.

Mr. Bright is unquestionably a fine humourist. His humour is of that rich and mellow kind which pervades the pages of the quaint old writers. Lord Beaconsfield, when provoked, was a master of sarcasm; Lord Sherborne, when goaded by stupidity or what he regards as prejudice, can call into exercise a power which, like the lightning, has a withering and blasting influence; but neither of these statesmen, nor indeed any other public speaker of our time, with the exception perhaps of Mr. Spurgeon, has the same full, genial, and flowing humour. Take some examples of this. There have been few happier strokes of Parliamentary humour in our time than Mr. Bright's comparison between Lord Beaconsfield and the quack at the country fair, who sold pills which were good against earthquakes. To an observation that the ancestors of a particular gentleman had come over with the Conqueror, he replied that they never did anything else. Then there was the comparison of Mr. Lowe and Mr. Horsman to a Scotch terrier; the epithet of the Adullamites; and the description of Mr. Disraeli as the 'mystery man' of the Ministry. The reader will find the numerous speeches given in the course of this work prolific in examples of humour.

As regards other personal characteristics, it may be mentioned that Mr. Bright is as earnest in his pleasures as he has been in his work. He is passionately fond of the country, and especially of the grand scenery with which the Scotch Highlands abound. He can, as is well known, throw a fly with any one,

and wait with a patience as exemplary for the fish to rise. In his younger days he was a proficient swimmer; and as far as indoor recreations are concerned, he can play a more than creditable game at billiards. His love of humanity needs no insisting upon; but he has also a great affection for the animal creation—dogs being his special favourites. He has that devoutness so highly esteemed by the poet, which consists in loving 'all things both great and small.'

But we are more immediately concerned with his moral characteristics. Who can but admire his unswerving advocacy of the principles of individual and national justice, duty, and righteousness? The just have no fear; and his motto, 'Be just, and fear not,' indicates the spirit in which he has always endeavoured to act. We may apply to him the words which Shakespeare makes Cominius utter respecting that noble Roman, Coriolanus:—

> 'It is held
> That valour is the chiefest virtue, and
> Most dignifies the haver; if it be,
> The man I speak of cannot in the world
> Be singly counterpoised.'

Even his enemies admire the moral courage of Mr. Bright; it is a valour that is both unmistakable and ennobling. It is his very devotion to the right which has led to the charge of intolerance being brought against him. But his intolerance is only the intolerance against wrong. He has a large and catholic nature, but he revolts against insincerity and buffoonery in politics. He thinks the right should be seen at once always, and is impatient when it is not perceived, or wilfully obscured. His sternness and intolerance are but those strong virtues which distinguish all reformers. The Puritans were stern, and in the eyes of the Cavaliers the most intolerant race upon the face of the earth; but they lived in stern times, and had stern work to do. So as regards Mr. Bright. When he began public life there were many abuses to be rectified, and that hydra-headed monster, Monopoly, required to be hurled down and destroyed. This was not work to be accomplished in kid gloves; it required men of earnest purpose, strong wills, and large hearts; and these were forthcoming in Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and other leaders who fought by their side.

It has further been charged against Mr. Bright that he has been an agitator. He admits the impeachment; for it is one into which no element of shame or regret can enter. Agitation has at certain periods in our history—even in the present cen-

tury—been absolutely necessary for the prosperity and the very safety of England. The agitators for slavery emancipation, Catholic emancipation, Free Trade, Reform, and other social and political measures affecting Great Britain and Ireland, did great and noble work. The agitator who divines the real instincts of a people, and judiciously guides their movements to fruition, is one who, call him by whatsoever name we will, is the world's benefactor. Such men perceive the dangers ahead, and are the true pilots in extremity.

The name of Mr. Bright has in certain circles been used as a name wherewith to alarm the timid, and to kindle their prejudices. It has been put forward as a bugbear to frighten people with. The charge is already beginning to excite the derision of those who dive beneath the surface of politics. If sagacity and foresight are titles to statesmanship, then is Mr. Bright a true statesman. For more than a generation he has been the true seer in English politics. He has nearly always been in the right. When we turn for a moment to the great questions of the last forty years—questions affecting Free Trade, India, Ireland, Russia, the American war, the *Alabama* arbitration, Parliamentary Reform, Church-rates, etc.,—and remember that in regard to them Mr. Bright has been in advance of his age,—our attitude towards him must perforce be that of admiration and gratitude, not of criticism and censure. His political career has been one long struggle for the overthrow of fallacies and disabilities. So far from being a revolutionist, he claims to be a good Conservative. And in the sense that he is the true Conservative who amends in order to preserve, he is right. Mr. Bright has cut deep into the wounds of the body corporate in order to restore it to health. The commonwealth could only be saved by probing it to its innermost depths. This is the logical defence of Mr. Bright's Liberal yet truly Conservative policy.

The most substantial virtue of a country is in its great men; and if that be so, as we are assured, let us not withhold the honour that is due to them. Greatness in the political world may be independent of politics; it is so in Mr. Bright's case. With whatever side of the House of Commons he had been led to identify himself, he must have added one more illustrious name to the roll of that party. He has preferred morality and justice to all the peerages and all the dynasties that ever existed in the world. Yet although he has ever been the chosen favourite of the democracy, it has been from no unworthy pandering to the passions of the multitude. He has not scrupled to correct their errors, and has educated them in order to raise

them. Liberty, as Daniel Webster said, is not lawless. 'It demands checks; it seeks for guards; it insists on securities; it entrenches itself behind strong defences, and fortifies itself with all possible care against the assaults and ambition of passion.' This is the liberty for which Mr. Bright has striven—not the liberty of license, as some have falsely alleged. He has exhibited a manly resistance to all forms of oppression and evil for conscience' sake; but at the same time he has never attempted to uproot the bonds of society; on the contrary, it has been one of his chief ends and desires to harmonize the various classes of his countrymen, not to throw society into disorder, disruption, and anarchy.

If we mistake not, the verdict of history upon Mr. Bright and his career will be such as to warrant our applying to him the words of Antony when speaking his valedictory words upon the great Cæsar:

> 'The elements
> So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man!"'

The social and political condition of England has been greatly changed since Mr. Bright entered upon public life; but notwithstanding all these radical reforms—may we not rather say in consequence of them?—the public institutions of the country are more stable, more firmly rooted, than they have ever been; while the loyalty and affection of the people towards the Sovereign of these realms have suffered no diminution.

We cannot expect, perhaps, to retain long amongst us the great survivors of that noble band of reformers who have rendered the past two generations so distinguished in our political annals. When we look forward into the future, also, it is difficult to perceive those who, amongst the rising statesmen of the time, may be capable of wearing the armour of Achilles; but we console ourselves with the reflection that in all times of crisis England has found her master minds. The career of one such we have endeavoured to trace; and so long as virtue, courage, and patriotism retain their significance, so long will these noble qualities continue to be associated with the name of John Bright. He takes rank with the Pyms, the Hampdens, the Miltons, and other incorruptible great men of the past, who, in times of difficulty and of peril, have unswervingly fought the battle of freedom, and asserted the liberties of England.

THE END.

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